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CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,

WITH

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM COLLINS GLASGOW

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THE

CHRISTIAN'S

COMPANION IN SOLITUDE.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE

REV. DAVID YOUNG,

PERTH.

GLASGOW:

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE is *one* word, at least, on the title page of this volume, which, with certain classes of people, will give to it no interest, and conciliate for it no friends.—"Solitude and a book!"—some one of them will exclaim—"and such a book as this too, which talks of nothing but solemn self-inquiry, and the duty and privilege of walking with God, and frequent spiritual converse with him, and breathings of Christian devotion!—This is a combination which will never do with me, and the person is not my friend, or else he knows me not, who would tender to me any such proposal. I, at least, am not made for solitude. The very thought of it, seriously urged upon me, has never failed to sicken my spirit, extinguish the vivacity of my nature, and involve me in sulkiness or sorrow. And to add to the solitude, the dull and dismal companionship of such a volume as this, which treats of a subject which I disown, and inculcates activities which I despise, and eulogizes pleasures which I dislike, is to deepen the gloom of my situation, and render my unhappiness complete."

Another may bring against the word a charge

which is yet more weighty than this. "I," he may say, "am a man of the world, with all my habits and inclinations formed to its gains or gratifications; but my youthful education was Christian, and my conscience, influenced by that education, is ever ready to reproach me with a base and perverse abandonment of my earliest and best impressions. I know more of Christianity already, than is compatible with peace of mind; and were I shut up in solitude with this volume in my hand, and no eye upon me but that of the great God, I could not fail to be utterly miserable. The reminiscences of education, which even in society I can scarcely evade, would freshen before me, and ply me with accusations which my heart cannot endure; the respondings of conscience within me would substantiate these accusations as righteous in themselves, and fearful in their indications; and resolved as I am, at all hazards, to hold on in my present career, what could solitude do for me, in circumstances so very critical, but fill me with horror and remorse? No, ye pleaders for Christianity, speak not of solitude to me. It is the staunchest and mightiest ally of my great and formidable enemy—the deputy of God within me; and I must avoid it, since I dare not meet it, as a man meets his adversary in direct and confronted combat."

There are others, however, by whom the announcement of a "Companion in Solitude" will be received with very different emotions. Society has used them ill, or at least they think so. They are the children of disappointment and chagrin. Their spirits are formed by natural infirmity, or have become by the attrition of life, so sore, and shrinking, and

sensitive, that they can no longer endure the justlings of social intercourse; and although they are still inclined to look at man through the transparencies of their apartments, or the duller medium of books, yet they are jealous of all exposure to the collision of his opinions. "Man was made for solitude," is the verdict which they give forth. "His tempers are too acrimonious to promote the comminglings of placid and pleasurable intercourse. There is so much of the selfish and artful, or malign and detractive, or rude and repulsive, in his nature, that there is no way of avoiding his enmity, nor any hope of continuous comfort, except in the abode of seclusion and loneliness." It is to be expected that such persons will hail the offer of a "Companion in Solitude," and that too with so much the greater cordiality, that the proffered companion is not a man but a book, which will talk, or be silent, give out suggestions, or retain them, just as they choose to open and read it, or shut it, and turn away—unless peradventure the word "Christian's" should prove a prefixture, which checks their fondness, or disappoints their expectations.

But there is little difficulty in perceiving, that all this talking, from first to last, is distempered talking —the crude and acrid cogitations of a mind which is chaffed by moral disease. That man was made for society is not true, if the meaning be that he should be always in society; and that he was made for solitude is equally untrue, if the meaning be that he should be always alone. There is truth in both statements, but the truths are correlative, reciprocally modifying and defining each other, and the

man who would hold by either, to the entire negation of the other, might, with nearly as little impropriety, affirm of the bodies of men that they were made to be awake but never asleep, or made to be asleep but never awake.

The truth is, that every man, by the law of his creation, is at once a part of an associated whole and a separate individual existence; and to view him exclusively in either of these aspects, and treat him according to its indications, is essentially to come short in the knowledge of his nature, and mar the culture of his powers. He must have society to stimulate his faculties, and rectify his juvenile errors, and form him to the business of social life, and furnish him with scenes of suitable development for the fellow-feeling of his heart: and he must have solitude, to consolidate the interests, and foster the growth, of his individual being, by securing the calm and considerate discipline of the multitude of thoughts which work within him. If you deny him the former altogether, you cripple his energies, and sophisticate his character, by entailing on him all the disabilities of an unnaturally protracted childhood; and if you deny him the latter altogether, you inure him to habits of restlessness and volatility, which are in no degree suited to his destiny, as a traveller to the world of spirits. It is by neither the one nor the other, but a wise attempering of both, according to diversities of constitution, and varied moral circumstances, that he can hope to attain the proper use of the situation in which God has placed him.

The man who declaims against solitude, then, because it involves him in *ennui*, or sours his humours

into disgust, is just taking his own way of giving the world to understand, not only that his head is empty, and his heart frivolous, but that he childishly rejects the use of a most effective instrument for promoting his moral well-being. He is indeed a miserable man; for having no resources within himself from which to derive enjoyment, or the means of profitable avocation, he is dependant every hour on supplies from without, and as these supplies are so precarious, as often to fail him in the meantime, while they leave him entirely at last, he denies himself the only training which can avail him in future emergencies. The man, again, who allows himself to be driven from solitude by the reproaches of his conscience, or the dreaded frown of omniscient God, is verily guilty by his own confession; and amidst all the deference, or even renown, which may be awarded to him by the irreligious, he wanders about like the first of murderers, a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, while, like that murderer too, he is atheist enough to imagine, that he can hide himself from the presence of the Lord. He is, in fact, a moral coward, who first does violence to heaven's eternal law, and then absconds, like the worst of miscreants, from the righteous reaction of that law. It is not solitude in itself, which is the object of his aversion, but that reckoning with God in the absence of man, to which solitude constrains him; and it were just as equitable to take *his* estimate of the matter, as to convert the traitor into a judge on the demerit of his own offences.

Nor is the verdict of those on the opposite extreme, who, as they think, have been justled out of

society, and soured into a love of solitude, by the supposed unfriendliness of others, entitled to a better reception. They speak the language of haste or spleen, but not of calm reflection. God has given them social affections, which they have no right to eradicate, and placed them in a system of connections, where they may reflect and receive a great variety of improving influences. He has promised privileges to be enjoined, and prescribed duties to be discharged, and determined reformations to be achieved, and created sympathies to be exercised, which all require the nerve, as well as the pervasive excitement, and mutually animating glow of united operation: and for them to fly off from associated life, in chagrin at the friction of its movements, is just to foster the monstrous presumption, that the mighty mechanism of human society, with all its grandeur and moral competency, ought either to work as they would have it, or be broken up and given to the winds, in homage to individual caprice.

Extravagances of this latter kind, however, are limited in number, and whatever injury they may inflict on their individual victim, they seldom amount to a sensible deduction from the effective resources of society at large. It is the excessive love of intercourse with his fellows, and not the desire of being alone, which is the besetting sin of modern man. Society around us, like the contents of the kaleidoscope, presents itself in many an aspect, while, in every one of them, it is glowing with fancied interest, and bright with illusory attraction. It is teeming with life, and warm with enterprize, rural or mercantile; it is ingenious in speculation, or

dexterous in art; polished and gay, or vulgar and dissipated; wallowing in wealth, or panting after it; all bustle and continual engrossment; wooing attention, and promising to repay it in many a nameless decorated form of gain, or honour, or mere amusement, as well as gross and vicious indulgence; while the tendency of the whole is to draw the incautious out of their seclusion, and keep them forever in the crowd. The result is, that, to an alarming extent, the people in many thousands, at every stage of life, and in all classes of society, have first forgotten, and then become afraid to enter on the business of solitude. They seem as if they had lost their individuality; and when a leisure hour can be redeemed from business or manual labour, instead of devoting it to solemn converse with themselves about the character and condition of their moral nature, or the gifts and requirements of the God that made them, or the ultimate destiny on which they are advancing, they rush into society, however frivolous, and give themselves up to its dissipating influence, as if they had nothing to occupy their minds but business and relaxation.

The moral injury which all this is silently inflicting on irreligious men cannot be easily estimated, while its tendency to defeat the formation of habits of self-inspection, or to destroy them where they exist, and thus prevent those moods of mind which are most favourable to religious impression, is a subject of melancholy reflection to every considerate mind. But it were too much to suppose that the injury is confined to this department, for experience has always taught us, that whatever the evil agency

may be which works pervasively in society at large, it is sure to take effect in less or more on the portion of Christianity which mingles with that society, and to taint the characters of her professors with the blight of its withering influence. That such is the case at present, in reference to the point before us, there can be no reasonable doubt. Christians are infected by the existing *mania* for business, or wealth, or splendour, or elegant frivolity, or showy amusement; and the consequence is, that even they as well as others are robbed of their time, and deprived of their relish for the duties of religious retirement.

When we speak of retirement, however, we mean by it a great deal more than that condition of external quiet in which the man is literally alone, with his body inactive, and his mind at ease, or floating at random through any forms of imagery which accident may throw in his way. This is not the business of retirement, but its relaxation which may at times be necessary to relieve the exhaustion of mind or body, and compensate for the drain of energy which prolonged exertion may have made upon both. But what we refer to, is that habit of mind, in the exercise of which, at convenient intervals, the Christian retires from the world in all its secular concerns, and deliberately places himself in the presence of his God, and enters on a solemn scrutiny of all his thoughts, and words, and actions, with their spirit, and motives, and tendencies; and brings the whole to the test of Christian privilege and Christian law, and ingenuously condemns himself wherever he is wrong, and renews his application

to the fountain of remission, as a victim of guilt and helplessness; and purposes amendment, in the spirit of contrition, and hope, and fear; and thus prepares himself for returning to society with a deeper awe upon his spirit, and a holier jealousy about him, as well as a renewed intensity of desire to be kept unspotted from the world. Such is a specimen of the serious business which every Christian must be in the habit of transacting, or else be guilty of egregious trifling with the weightiest of all his concerns; and it is but a specimen: for although this may be regarded as the essential part which claims the attention of all, yet the business of solitude must be greatly diversified, according to varied circumstances, personal, or relative, or local, in which the man is placed in the course of providence.

Now, although it requires no argument, nor any expostulation, either to convince a real Christian, that this is a business of vital importance for clearing up his course, and enabling him to travel onwards with confidence and joy, or to assure him, that he must have his intervals of solitude, to enable him to conduct it with suitable deliberation; yet the grand obstacle which opposes the assurance, in the minds of not a few, is the want of time, imagined or real, for that reflective solitude which is necessary to its success. When the Christian is reasoned with, about his omissions in this department, he cannot contest the point of duty, for this point he feels settled within him, by something like the decision of instinct; but his plea of defence is usually as follows, "I know the importance of what you contend for, and most sincerely do I deplore the adverse circum-

stances which place it so often beyond my reach, but I am so much the victim of care, and business, and ever-recurring incident, and endlessly harassing solicitude, that my mind is scarcely ever composed; and how can I enter on so solemn an exercise, except in a haste and flutter of spirit, which are quite incompatible with its character?"

This objection, it is frankly admitted, we cannot refute by a direct disproof of its verity; for no man who sits in his closet, and expostulates on paper with the Christian public, can venture to specify the portions of time which might be rescued by them to Christian purposes, without admitting into his calculation a considerable variety of items, which, in the experience of not a few, may be known to be irredeemable. Nor must it be denied, that the objection involves a real grievance, which is often the source of ingenuous regret to many a good man. But it is a principle of very general currency, both among the maxims of the moralist, and in the annals of human experience, that a man seldom fails to find time for that which is impressed upon his mind as a matter of primary importance. The magnitude of such a thing so engrosses his thoughts, and pleads for the pre-eminence, as to reduce other concerns to the rank of secondaries in his view; and thus does it happen, that the great concern, just because it is *felt* to be great, not only finds room for itself, and time for its consideration, but exerts a commanding influence over all his other activities, laying them under a regular contribution to its power and its prerogative. The dominion which a matter of magnitude is capable of holding over the human mind

in this way, is truly astonishing; and what is more, when this matter is wisely chosen, or worthy of the place assigned to it, its dominant influence is far less obstructive of the claims of minor interest, than beforehand was expected. We wish to found upon this principle, in the case before us, and being quite assured, that in proportion as the importance of solitude is clearly made out to the mind of a Christian, he gains the power of commanding time for it. Let us devote a few pages to the elucidation of its importance.

1. The Christian requires solitude to preserve the entireness of his own individual existence, in a moral point of view. Although no extent of intercourse with society can put a person in any hazard of losing the identity of his mind, in the physical sense of the word, yet, in a moral point of view, the danger of falling under this calamity is any thing but small. A man may be so frequently conversant with other men, and so powerfully influenced by their spirit and opinions, as to cease from having any spirit or any opinions of his own. The individuality of his mind, as a principle which is bound to think for itself, and act from its own independent convictions, may be so neutralized, by a kind of absorption into other minds, as to be no longer *itself*, but converted by a process of slow and insensible transmutation into the creature of other minds. We need not specify cases to show that this possibility is often realized in fact; for every one knows that it is so who has seen but a little of the living world. Nor are the instances of this confined to those whose

physical imbecility seems to warrant their relinquishment of mental independence, as the dictate of practical wisdom—a class, by the way, which we believe to be small indeed—but the same instances, we fear, are, through the operation of various causes, to be found among vast multitudes, who are perfectly capable of asserting the right, and exercising the privilege which is chartered to them, by the God that made them.

It is very true, that the doctrine of independence has its limits, beyond which it cannot be carried without a certain detriment; for many an excellent public measure, either in politics or religion, would remain for ever unaccomplished, unless, at the proper crisis, some potent spirit should emerge from the crowd, and become the leader of thousands: although even here, the gathered host must ever be unwieldy, unless it has been drawn together by a unison of *individual* opinion.—But to follow a leader in matters of solemn personal concern, and such a leader too, as promiscuous Christian society, till a man has lost his moral identity in the mass of that society, and *positively ceased to be his own*, is to inflict an injury on his spiritual well-being, which nothing earthly can compensate. It interposes an authority, which is truly alien between his conscience and the authority of God: and thus entails on him the awful evil of living without God in the world. For, although the associates be really religious, to whom he has committed the forming of his character, and although the influence which they send forth upon him be ever so pure or well intentioned, yet if he has failed to discriminate in the

matter; if he has allowed others to think for him, but declined to think for himself; if he is only religious because they are religious, and has thus become *their* creature, but not the creature of their God in Christ; he may palliate the matter as he will, and there may be redeeming circumstances of which we wish not to deprive him, but he cannot entirely escape the charge of "changing the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." It is in this one mistake, so deep and disastrous, and mournfully prevalent, that we are to seek for the origin of that flimsy ephemeral piety, with which the church is so sorely aggrieved —a piety, which to-day may be fresh, and lively, and all to your mind, but to-morrow has dropped into extinction—a piety in short, which may seem to prosper so long as you surround it with a suitable influence, or allow it to lean on the piety of others; but, if left to itself, or constrained to subsist on its own resources, is instantly in danger, and easily overthrown by the slightest wind of temptation.

Now, although solitude in itself is not the remedy for this evil, yet it is the only suitable situation where the remedy can be sought or found. Men vacillate in religion, or adopt the current creed, or easily take the mould of society around them; just because they have lost the power, or never firmly asserted it, of thinking for themselves. But, if they are to think *for* themselves, to any effective purpose, they must also contrive to be *by* themselves; for it is not among crowds, or in the bustle of social intercourse, that a man can be expected to isolate his soul from extrinsic influence, and cause it to feel its individual

responsibility, and constrain it to have to do immediately and directly with him, who alone has a right to govern it. Assuredly not. To secure the entireness of his separate existence, or to preserve that mind which he feels to be *himself*, from being merged in the thoughts, or blended with the feelings, or passively changed into the likeness of other minds, which cannot meet his destiny, nor relieve him of his responsibilities, there must be seasons at which he stands off from society, and discards it from his view, and devotes himself assiduously to those peculiar concerns, which by the law of his creation are emphatically his own. Thus it is, that any human being, whatsoever he be, who is estranged from the duties of thoughtful solitude, misuses his own nature, and exposes it to fearful hazards. But if this be true of man, as man, what additional force is given to its truth, in the case of the Christian, who has a spiritual process going on within him, so interesting in itself, so easily injured by intrusion from the world, requiring such a carefulness of personal management, and so sublime in the result to which it is advancing?

2. The Christian requires solitude, to gain him acquaintance with the state of his heart as a religious being. Nothing can be more precious to a serious professor of Christianity, than the means of ascertaining whether he is or is not a living subject of that religion, the name of which he has assumed. Or if he has ascertained this point already on the one side, or on the other, it is of the utmost importance for him to keep reckoning with his soul forever

afterward, in order to satisfy himself whether the workings of his mind, which follow the ascertainment, are suited or opposed to its special indications. For if he allows himself to get into darkness here, and slothfully permits the darkness to continue, it will spread an influence, the most injurious, over the whole extent of his religious interests. He may still be in earnest about the matter, or feel himself the subject of confused religious impressions; but how can he have freedom of mind to perform the duties of religion, or partake of its warranted consolations, while he hangs in continual suspense, and knows not the precise character in which he has to do with the God of salvation. We grant, indeed, that the case of a bewildered Christian, and that of an awakened sinner, may so resemble each other, that the exercise which is suited to the one in his perplexities, may be equally suited to the other; and we grant also, that a Christian approaching his God amidst much confusion of mind, and great indefiniteness of view and exercise, may yet find acceptance and spiritual relief; but still the man who is a Christian, ought to make his approach as a Christian, and not merely as a sinner awakened; and whenever he loses the power of doing so, he loses also a high advantage for the prosecution of religious exercise.

That there *is* a distinction, which is not only assignable in itself, but highly serviceable in a practical point of view, between the modification of religious exercise, which is proper for him who knows himself a Christian, and that which befits the man who, so far as he knows, is only the subject of serious concern, will be readily admitted by all who are

suitably acquainted with the Christian life. In the former case, there is a saving relation, not only established, but known and experienced, between the worshipper and him whom he adores, with a character of sonship, and a title of peculiar privilege involved in that relation; and thus a provision made both ample and efficient, as well as presently felt, for exciting the emotions of filial confidence, and prompting the utterance of gratitude and joy. But in the latter case, there is no such relation as yet existing, or at least at present in his view, and, of course, there can be no experience of any one specific emotion to which it gives rise. The man is distressed, because he is alive to the dismal indications of his guilt and depravity; or his distress, it may be, is alleviated, in some degree, by the loose and indefinite hope, that God may possibly grant him deliverance; but, in the mean time, there is nothing in him, or put upon him, so far as he has any evidence, which characterizes a child of God. It is a very possible thing, that this latter person may be a child of God, as really, although not so obviously, as the former—we shall assume it, that he is so, and that the spirit of adoption is stirring within him, although he cannot discern its symptoms; but whatever may be the secret fact, it is to him for the present, as if it were not, and when he approaches unto God, in such a state of mind, he is constrained to do so amidst all the confusion or distraction of thought which its character entails. He draws near, not with the confidence of a child, but with the feverish solicitude of an alien or outcast. Were this a case but seldom to be met with, it might occasion less regret, but if

it be in fact a common case, as we fear must be admitted, and if not a few who are really serious, are found to languish under its disquietudes, to the wounding of their spirits, and the grievous hinderance of their growth in grace, for many months or years together, it merits the gravest consideration.

But let it be carefully noticed here, that while the man who is a Christian, possesses facilities for the practice of piety, which are altogether peculiar to himself, the whole of these facilities arises from the fact of his knowing what he is, and from that fact alone. The spirit of the gospel is not a dormant spirit, giving life without consciousness, or imparting privilege which is unperceived. It is just the reverse of this; for in its very essence it is a matter of consciousness, distinctly appreciated, and uniformly digested into experience, by all its genuine subjects. But if this be its character, it is morally impossible for any man to avail himself practically of its high excitements, or do suitable homage to its great Author, except in as far as he *feels* it made out, that his heart is the seat of its saving influence. There are but two spirits which can operate here, the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption; and the soul which feels not the risings of the latter, must necessarily be repressed by the forebodings of the former. There may be the reality of vital religion where there is little of clearance or certainty, just as there may be bodily life amidst the symptoms of a weakening disease; but as, in the one case, the man must come short in discharging secular duty, so, in the other, must he come short in discharging the duties which are religious.

That this shortcoming not only exists, but has attained a deplorable prevalence, we need no other evidence than the honest admissions and lamentations of Christians themselves. Although they choose not to unbosom their secret to those who have none of their sympathies, and cannot appreciate their regrets, yet among their intimates the complaint is loud and affecting, that although their external access to the Scriptures, or the Sabbath, or the preaching of the gospel, or the prayers and praises of the church, or the socialities of religion in domestic exercises, be free and unembarrassed, and although they are not only conscious of a sacred veneration for religious institutions, but cherish at their hearts a very vivid impression of the spiritual invigoration which they are fitted to impart, yet they derive from them little excitement, and experience in them little enjoyment. They are poor and perplexed, amidst a flowing abundance of spiritual wealth and spiritual solacement; or are peevish and querulous, under the very same privileges which minister to others satisfaction and delight.

Now we would call upon every one who is found complaining as above, most solemnly to inquire—whether the cause of the evil complained of, may not be not only an *uncertainty*, but *a culpable and tolerated uncertainty*, about his true character in the sight of God—and whether the precise kind of culpability which superinduced this *uncertainty*, or suffers it to deepen and extend, be not the entire omission, or the slight and fitful performance of the duties of a meditative solitude.

3. The Christian requires solitude, for the profitable management of the moral elements in which he has to move. We have said already, that man requires to be alone, to preserve his mind from that absorption—to speak so—in the minds of others, which injures or destroys his natural independence, and thereby unfits him for doing his duty. But, there is more than this which requires attention, in reference to society around him. Such society is intended, by the God of providence, to promote his education for the spiritual world; and besides preventing it from injurious invasion, he ought to improve it for positive advantage. It is not enough that its evil be neutralized, it must be rendered serviceable; and the man who has failed to do the latter, is sure to come short in attaining the former. There is so much of the *positive* in the influence of human society, and so much of the *susceptible* in every one who comes near it, that good or evil, gain or loss, advantage or disadvantage, must result from its daily intromissions with him. It is clearly not possible for a man to mingle with other people, in their religion, or their business, or contentions, or friendly fellowship, or even in their lighter conversations, without taking impressions from them, of one kind or other; which go, it may be said, into his moral constitution, and powerfully influence the formation of his character. However taciturn his habits may be, he at least gazes on a scene of moral phenomena, which is ever shifting, and much deversified, and is all over-glowing with interest, just because he feels it a development of man. In fact, he lives in a moral element, the motion of which he feels, and

the spirit of which he inhales, and the forms of which he puts on, and from the region of which he cannot escape; and although the action of its influence on his heart and character, may be slow or silent, or stealthy in its progress, yet it goes deep, and works pervasively, on both the one and the other.

For examples of this influence on classes of men, we have only to trace a comparison between the citizen and the man of the country; the Scotsman, and the English, or Irishman; the Briton, and the Frenchman; the travelled man, and the dweller at home;—all of whom are modified by the general influence of society, while each of them exhibits a specific modification according to the particular kind of society in which his character was formed—thus illustrating its powerful tendency, in all places of the earth, to mould the individual into the likeness of itself. Now, in the bosom of this tendency, there lies a moral agency, of very serious import to the individual Christian. It may in fact destroy him, as was hinted formerly, if he give himself up to it, and allow it to make of him whatsoever it pleases. But, on the other hand, it may do him much good, if he set himself with firmness to master its ascendency, and hold it in subordination to the great business of his life. Nay, it is fraught with benefits, some of them pleasurable, and others painful; but all of them fitted, when wisely improven, to consolidate within him the principles of piety, and make him skilful in the practice of righteousness. God has ordained it for this very end, and, without quarrelling with the ordination on the one extreme, or seeking its pleasures without its profits on the other,

he should take it as it is, and deport himself accordingly. The virtues of social life exhibit an example which is powerful, because living, and human, and is set before his eyes to fire his emulation, or rebuke his conscious deficiencies—the blemishes blended with these virtues, and seen by him in others, but not so easily in himself, are intended to stimulate his vigilance, and quicken his self-inspection—the ever-recurring follies of life, with the disasters which often follow them, are disclosed before him in many forms, to keep him from copying after them, and teach him maxims of wisdom—the whole commixture, in short, of piety and impiety, knowledge and ignorance, experience and inexperience, truth and error, integrity and crime, love and hatred, peace and contention, spiritual and secular affection, comfort and wretchedness, is disclosed to his view, in warm and restless activity; with the God of providence pervading the whole, and controlling its every movement, just that he may gather out of it those stimulants, or caveats, or gratitudes, or regrets, which enter into his education for the scenes of a loftier fellowship.

But it is very manifest, here again, that these advantages are not to be acquired by thoughtless indifference, or a passive acquiescence in all that occurs; but by a calm, and active, and meditative survey of actions, and incidents, and moral appearance, as they pass in review before him, and a subjecting of these to the great purpose for which he is placed among them. It is not by yielding himself up to the current, but by gliding along with it, or beating up against it, or crossing it obliquely, ac-

cording as he finds it favourable or adverse, that the mariner reaches the distant haven. He floats not inactive on the bosom of the ocean, but rules it by the laws of his art, and compels it to aid his design amidst all its tumultuary movements. So must it be with the man who feels himself afloat on the ocean of human society. He must not be a bondman, but a freeman in that society; not its vassal, but its lord, resisting its hurtful encroachments, and laying it under contribution to the specific business of his life. We say not that he is bound to control its measures, or is always able to do this any more than the voyager can bid the billows be still, or compel them to undulate in the direction of his movement; but, resting on the resources of his religion, he is able to control its influence in its effects upon himself, and estimate its operation on the spirit of his mind, and convert it into a ministration of salutary Christian tuition.

In order to this, however, it is indispensable that he retreat upon his Bible, and imbue his mind with the holy principles of his Bible, and bring the influence of society into comparison with these principles, as the grand ultimate test by which it is to be tried. Without the aid of this supreme *directory*, he has no means of managing society, nor any sure guide by which to discover the practical use to which its appearances ought to be turned. Without it, in short, he is weak and helpless, having nothing to oppose to the errors of society, but his own private sentiment; nor any thing to sanction its seeming rectitude, but the concurrence of erring mortals; nor any solution of its dubious phenomena, but con-

jectures as dubious as they. But this comparison of the spirit of society, with the pure spirit of the Bible, and consequent ascertainment of its practical results, is not an *act* to be despatched at once, but a *process* of thought and carefulness, running on through the course of life, adapting itself to the varied aspects which the moving world successively assumes, and necessary, at every stage, to turn the whole to a profitable account. We need not say to the considerate reader, that this view of his situation opens to him another field for the specific exercises of Christian solitude—a field which is spacious and inviting, and which cannot fail, if gleaned to purpose, to enrich him with spiritual wisdom. But neither need we say to him, that this same solitude is the exclusive scene where the fruits of this field can be converted to practical uses. He knows it is not amidst the toils of the day, and the hum of the busy throng, but in the calm of the evening, that the husbandman reviews his procedure, and detects its errors or oversights, and digests for use the results of his experience, and thus becomes wise and skilful in rendering the earth productive; and he feels, in analogy with this, that the man who is charged with the culture of a heart, amidst the din and commotion of social life, must also have his evenings of quietness, when he looks in secret into his precious trust, and ascertains its real condition, and trains it to make a sacred use, with sorrow, or with satisfaction, of its ever recurring intercourse with the hearts of others around him.

4. The Christian requires solitude to recover the

exhaustion of social life. There is a physical exhaustion of body, or of mind, which may be easily superinduced on so frail an existence as ours, in the present state of things. At present, however, we refer to a kind of it which is moral, and spiritual; and while it is not only true, but ought to be distinctly maintained, that the prosecution of Christian duty, amidst the enjoyment of its special privileges, does not exhaust, but greatly invigorate the energies of the soul in a moral or spiritual point of view—since "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright"—yet in so mixed a state of things as ours, both within the Christian, and around him, he is often conscious of an exhaustion, spiritual as well as physical, from intercourse with promiscuous society; for which it is indispensable that relief be at intervals procured. Like other beings, he has his element, *out* of which entirely he cannot live at all, and even *in* which, his spirits languish in proportion as it is mixed or vitiated. If the circle in which he moves be neutral as to piety, but rational and intellectual, and exactly to his mind in every thing else, he is apt to be snared, by its attractions, into moods of mind, or trains of thinking, or even habits and inclinations, which are utterly at variance with the dictates of his better judgment. If it be merely frivolous, but engaging in its way, and suited to his taste in matters of relaxation, he is in danger of being caught into the whirl of its frivolity, till his mind is relaxed and dissipated, and the tone of its piety wofully subdued. Or if it be absolutely ungodly—for in such society even a Christian must sometimes take his place—he is apt to be fretted and vexed, if not

infected by its contagion, his feelings lacerated, his patience worn out, and his whole soul most grievously discomposed for the subsequent exercises of religion. These things, and others like them—for we cannot do more than glance at the topic—may assail the Christian in succession, or in formidable combination, resisting his efforts, and quenching his holy aspirings, till, in the struggle against their influence, his strength is wasted, and the things which remain within him are ready to die. These hindrances we know, are not the produce of mere speculation, or the fantastic vexations of an enthusiasm which would overdrive the business of religion, they are realities experienced, and deplored, in one degree or other, by every one who knows what it is to be a Christian, and has set himself in good earnest to exemplify the spirit of the gospel.

To be kept entirely from the scenes, where such influences are put forth, is not desirable, and, generally speaking, it is not possible. This would be to go out of the world, and live a life of absolute seclusion—to lose the good to be got in society, for the sake of avoiding its evil—a plain contravention of the fixed arrangements of a gracious providence. But still it is most desirable, that this evil be counteracted, and we know not of any counteraction, so apposite, or so congenial, to the heart of a weary Christian, as retiring into solitude, and recruiting himself there in fellowship with his God. He may please himself, for a time, with other expedients, as a substitute for this, but will find them in the end, to be utterly unavailing. He may pass from a circle which is less spiritual, to one which is more so, and he may

find benefit from the change; but still he is mixing with creatures like himself, where the evil comes out upon him, as well as the good. Or he may lay himself under restraints, and endeavour to muster efforts of vigilance or discrimination; but restraints and efforts are things of nought, unless they be grounded on Christian principles, wrought into the understanding, and progressively matured in the heart; and to arrive at this, there must be occasions eagerly sought for, and sacredly improved, when he turns his back upon the creature, and goes into solemn conference, not in company with other Christians, but absolutely alone, with the God of his salvation. For the man, in short, who is often exhausted by breathing the arid and dusty atmosphere of this world's society, there is but one resource—a corresponding frequency of retirement to the green pastures and still waters of spiritual invigoration, which await him in Christian solitude. Estranged from these, his soul must cleave to the dust, under the unbearable oppression of languor and debility; but refreshed by the pure and celestial inhalations which this retreat affords him, his soul will come to itself, and be fitted for returning to intercourse with man, when duty or necessity requires it, with safety to himself, and advantage to his fellows.

5. He requires it to gratify his desire for specific Christian enjoyment. Christianity, even in this world, is not an administration of discipline alone, but also a source of enjoyment, the sweetest and most sublime of which humanity is susceptible in the present state of being. It contains a system of disci-

pline, suited to the condition in which it finds its objects, but this discipline is enjoined for the sake of the enjoyment, and as the former prospers the latter is increased. But this enjoyment, in its finest forms, consists not in the mere restoration of a capacity for the sound and salutary use of the good things of this life—although this also we owe to the gospel—it is quite specific in its character, arising from the direct disclosures of Christianity itself, embraced and appreciated in the charm of its intrinsic excellence; and in this form its delights are ever the purest, as well as the richest and most felicitating in the experience of the spiritual participant. "We joy *in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom we have received the reconciliation."

Nay, more than this, Christianity, in its distinctive form, as a revelation from God to man, is most emphatically a religion of love. The sum of its announcements is, that "God *so loved* the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" and for this very reason, it ministers to happiness, for love is the basis of enjoyment. Where love is not in any department of the moral universe, life is insipid; and, in proportion as its opposite prevails, the creature verges to the extreme of misery. But, to whatever extent Christianity is conspicuous for love, in the spirit of its administration as coming from God, to the very same extent must it tend to generate love, and thereby propagate enjoyment, in its practical operations in the hearts of its subjects. That this is its tendency, every one of its genuine subjects, from the least to the greatest, who has

cleared his way to a knowledge of his true character, has the witness in himself. He is convinced, by experience, that just as certainly as he has a human existence, with capacities of human enjoyment, and irrepressible cravings after it, he has a spiritual existence distinct from the former, but created within it, and impelling him, by its distinct aspirings, to seek for enjoyments which correspond with its spiritual nature. So inseparable, indeed, are these latter aspirings, from the very infancy of the new creation, that they often actuate the man who knows not in what they originate, and is far from regarding them as the indications of a spirit forming for immortality.

Our religion, then, is essentially a religion of enjoyment; the effect of its operation in the hearts of men, is to restore capacities, and awaken desires, which are congenial with its celestial nature; and it is the characteristic of the Christian in all stages of his being—a characteristic which may often be marred, but never destroyed—to seek after the gratification of these desires. Not only does he pant for enjoyment, like every thing sentient beneath the sun, but he follows out the analogy still farther, and pants for that species of enjoyment as exclusively his own, which, emanating from the gospel of the grace of God, accords with his peculiar propensities.

Now we say, that this love of enjoyment, is another powerful inducement for cultivating habits of solitude. The joys of salvation, it is very true, are not confined to scenes of seclusion, but may flow in upon the soul in refreshing abundance, amidst great variety of outward circumstances. They may spring up most delightfully in the assemblies of the saints,

or in the privacy of social piety, or in the career of righteous effort, against the fierceness and obstinate contendings of a widely prevalent impiety; although, even in these instances, we believe they are seldom very copious, except with the man whose heart is seasoned for them, and warmed with the love of them in the secrecy of his closet. We may admire the friend whom we greatly esteem, and feel ourselves greatly honoured, when we meet him in company with others, and are permitted to share in the general delight which his wisdom or goodness may diffuse around him; but the privilege is unspeakably higher, when admitted into his presence alone, to experience the intimacies of his friendship, and behold the opening interior of his character, and confide to him our deepest secrets, without suspicion or reserve.

This is privilege, carried to its summit in the intercourse of man with man, but the principle applies with augmented force to the Christian's intercourse with his God. His heart may be very happy, while it mingles itself with kindred hearts *in the presence of the Lord.* But it is amidst the musings of a pious secrecy *with the Lord*, when conscious of no restraint, even from the presence of fellow Christians, and caught away in happy seclusion from terrestrial concerns, that the Christian enjoys the fulness of his liberty, and soars into the altitudes of delight. It is in this particular state of mind, more effectually than in any other, that he gets above the mists and shadows which becloud the glories of spiritual things, and diminish their power to captivate or awe—it is here that his eye-sight is cleared and

strengthened for a steady and boundless survey of the wonders of the Godhead manifest in flesh—it is here that the business of this world, in its cares and crosses, or treacherous enticements, falls off from him, like the mantle of the ascending prophet, and is quite forgotten while he worships afar—it is here that the weightier woes of life, moral as well as secular, are surmounted or mitigated, deprived of their power to oppress, and converted into the means of mellowing and extending the emotions of spiritual delight—it is here that the remembrances of past experience, with manifold sins and forgivenesses, are freshened and renewed, exalting the Creator, but abasing the creature, and teaching him to sing, in sweetest melody, of mercies mingled with judgments —and it is here too, as in his presence-chamber, with the special favourite of his love, that the Spirit of the living God surpasses his ordinary condescension, displaying the tenderness of his compassion, and the exceeding riches of his grace, with a clearness, and force, and glowing interest, which fill the soul with hallowed rapture, and lift it into the sublimities of adoration and praise.

Such are some of the joys, which the man addicted to Christian solitude, in the spiritual sense of the language, may hope to realize; and if the reader appreciates their excellence, if he judges them worthy of his most ardent pursuit, let him frequent the scene, and cultivate the frame of spirit in which he is most likely to be blessed with their visitations. We know there are minds so coarse and ungodly as to deride them all as the dreams of fanaticism; and we know also, that a dreaming fanaticism may mix

itself with them, or seek a transient shelter under their venerated umbrage, but the joys themselves are solid and rational, accordant with the genius of Christianity, supported by the spirit of its doctrines, promised and exemplified in its sacred record, and attested to every age as matter of undoubted experience, by men of the soundest understandings. The beauties of colour, or natural scenery, remain the same, although the blind or dim-sighted cannot admire them. So do the joys of religion; and to discard as visionary, those sentiments or emotions which, from obvious moral deficiency, we are incapable of discerning, is to exemplify the workings of a most outrageous frenzy.

These five considerations then, are submitted to the reader, as a specimen of the advantages to be derived from solitude with his God. And oh! let him subject them to serious review, for if it be the case that this species of exercise, when rightly conducted, has indeed a powerful tendency to secure to him that natural independence of mind, which belongs to him as an individual, and for which he is necessarily held responsible; that it fits him for the proper management of the moral elements, among which he moves; that it aids him most effectively in ascertaining the state of his heart; that it yields him often a most grateful relief, from the spiritual exhaustion of social life; and that it opens to him springs of specific enjoyment, which without it are but sparingly attained—if it thus goes to clear and consolidate his character, and give him nerve and decision in the Christian life, then surely it must assume an

importance in his eye, which will easily induce him to sacrifice not a little for the sake of giving it its due. Let him weigh it well, in its claims upon his notice; let him allow it to stand out before him, in its real magnitude and paramount importance; and it *will* find its share in the regular distribution of his time: for the want of time, so loudly deplored in almost all departments of human activity, is not absolute, but relative, arising not from an actual scarcity in that precious commodity, but from the want of due economy in the selection of its employment. Let him yield so far to the plainest dictates of common sense, and general experience, and enlightened self-love, as to give to that which is first in importance, the primary place in his plan of operation, and then will he find, that business or recreation, or whatsoever else there be, which interferes with his wishes and convictions, will give way, in respectful deference, to the claims of a higher duty to himself and his God.

The greatest obstruction, perhaps, to the practical adoption of this maxim, even among those who are seriously disposed, is a hankering after the idea, that a man may be a very good Christian, although greatly deficient in the exercises of the closet; especially when his situation is such as to render it very difficult, if not entirely impossible, to pay them sufficient attention. Now, it is cheerfully granted, that peculiarity of situation ought, in all reason, to modify the point for which we plead; and, by consequence, that the guilt of one man in neglecting the duties of solitude, may be far more heinous than that of another, although the instances of neglect in

both cases are nearly the same as to number. It is granted moreover, that some men, who are scarcely ever in solitude, except in the slumbers of the night, and these slumbers, it may be, of brief duration—do yet exhibit the decided symptoms of a prosperous growth in grace. But these men are few, and it is dangerous in the extreme to reduce their example to a general rule. They are anomalies in the world of piety and business, and the man who possesses not their tact, should never commit himself to their hazards. For let their secret be sought out, and we believe it will be found, that almost every one of them has acquired the happy art, of being alone in company; giving his hands, or his lips, to intercourse with man, while his heart is engaged in converse with God, or snatching his moments for spiritual soliloquy, from the transient intervals of secular business. But such instances as these, so far from palliating the neglect of the duty, present the strongest enforcement of its indispensable necessity. They show us, that the man who is much involved in the business of this world, must either make uncommon efforts to maintain his spiritual well-being, and train himself to habitudes which few are able to acquire, or sacrifice his eternal interests at the shrine of temporal advantage. They establish it, in short, beyond all contradiction, that the Christian, howsoever situated, having business of his own to transact, must withdraw himself from other business, in order to transact it; and that the man who fails to do this for any consideration whatever, is guilty of foregoing, so far as he fails, the character and prospects of a follower of Jesus Christ.

But, since the Christian must have solitude, he must also have something to aid him in rendering that solitude spiritually productive, and the best of all assistances, in such a work as this, is the close and cherished companionship of his Bible itself. It is there that he finds the subtilties of human depravity detected and laid open with unerring skill; it is there that he finds his religion propounded in its doctrines, and exemplified in its pure spirit, with a power, and authority, and persuasiveness of grace, which cannot be given to them any where else; and it is there of course, that he talks with his God, in a style of conference, the purest, and most exalting that can ever be arrived at, beneath the sun. By coming directly to the Bible, he brings himself at once to the ultimate test, in all matters of difficulty; and drinks the refreshment of grace and truth, as it emanates pure from the fountain; and experiences the sweetest solacements, to sooth his sorrows, and cheer him onwards, through all the stages of his present pilgrimage.

In full consistency with this, however, and just because it is true, it is matter of general experience, that, in order to gain the full advantage of being regularly closeted with his Bible, the Christian must be indebted to those who have studied it before him. He needs their admonitions, to remind him of the duty, and urge him to perform it; he needs the fruit of their labours, to elicit the spirit of his Bible, and render its suggestions easily accessible, or adapt them to the state of his mind; he needs their example, to show him their manner of conducting their meditations, and induce him to

copy after it; he needs the tuition of their knowledge and experience, to correct his mistakes, and guide him to sound and solid results; and he needs to see specimens of their success, to beget in him love to exercises which are found so very consoling, and fraught with so many enriching rewards, to all who conduct them aright. To be conversant with the writings of men, however great or holy, at the expense of neglecting the oracles of God, is to throw a grievous obstruction in the way of religious prosperity; and when this is, in any case, the tendency of his conduct, the Christian has cause for alarm. But when he keeps these writings in their proper place, and makes a judicious choice of them, and submits his conscience to their reasonings, and imbibes the spirit which they breathe, their tendency is just the reverse of this, they carry him *to* his Bible, and not *away* from it; they unlock its precious treasures; they teach him to admire its teeming disclosures; they are the best means for opening his eyes to behold the wonders which it contains.

Now, we have no hesitation in setting forth this little Volume, as one of the most available of these means. It is an excellent *vade mecum* for the Christian to take with him into the sequestration of a pious solitude. He cannot make it his friend, without going deep into the knowledge of himself, and rising insensibly into fellowship with heaven. It flows in upon his soul in four separate streams. But although separate, these streams are congenial. Their general nature is the same. They issue from the same source—the revelation of mercy to man; and

they converge to the same point—the eternal well-being of human kind. While each of them glides in its own channel, and interferes not with the course of the others, it carries along with it its own portion of pure salubrious efficacy from the fountain of saving grace. From each of them apart, the pensive Christian may imbibe an influence which is deeply spiritual, and powerfully exciting; and, from the diligent use of the whole combined, he may gather up "doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction in righteousness," to an extent, and with an appropriate diversity, which is rarely to be met with in so short a compass.

The reader who has but little experience in specific Christian exercise, we would earnestly request to peruse this volume, *in the order in which it is set* before him. But let the perusal be calm and wakeful, admitting of no haste, and disturbed by no intrusion which he feels to be incompatible with distinctness of view, and closeness of application, as he passes along.

In its first Treatise, by Richard Baxter, the most forcible and fervid of Puritan writers, you have the "Duty and Privilege of Walking with God," not only sketched in its general outline, but powerfully delineated in its nature and spirit, its latitude and diversity, its manifold utilities and indispensable obligation. Nor is the delineation merely contemplative, but, in a practical point of view, controversial and searching. It goes directly to the conscience, detecting its sophistries and delusions, showing it its errors and evasions, evincing the claims

of God upon man, and disclosing man to himself, with a warmth of eloquence, and cogency of holy argument, which depravity may resist, but reasoning can never refute.

In its second Treatise, by Baxter also, under the title, "Converse with God in Solitude," you see the passive virtues of the Christian life brought out into view; the scenes of diversified sorrow, which ought to bring these virtues into operation, impressively sketched, and satisfactorily accounted for; and a most instructive description of what it really is to have the gracious presence of God amidst the sorrows of life, with the considerations which render it desirable, and the means of attaining its consolations, or promoting its increase and perpetuity, clearly stated, and most forcibly recommended. And here, dejected Christian reader, you meet with nothing that is laboured or lengthy, but brief and pointed paragraphs, indited in the tenderness of Christian sympathy, and fitted, often by a single touch, to break the spell of your oppressive sorrow, and introduce you to holy tranquillity.

In its third Treatise, from the pen of CORBET, whose eulogy has been written with the highest applause, you have the exercise of dealing with yourself in secret, and the workings of piety in affliction, exemplified after a manner which is invitingly brief, yet clear, and full, and faithful, and followed up by a series of hints or admonitions, so sound in themselves, and so admirably adapted to the occurrences of life, that the Christian who imbibes their spirit, and reduces them to daily practice, will find his industry most richly rewarded.

In its last Treatise—whose author we cannot name, but which has been renewed and enlarged by the late Mr. Brown of Haddington, to whom Scotland owes much—we see the Christian in his native element, conscious of guilt, and distance, and debility, but awake to the interest of the spiritual world, engrossed with the forethought of its sublime enjoyments, and tending towards it as he may, on the lifted wing of evangelical aspiration. It has got the name of "Devout Breathings," and this designation is so graphic and complete, that we presume not to characterize it in any other terms. We know not of any thing human which is better fitted to guide, or enrich, or stimulate devotion in the heart of a languishing Christian. If you grant it a fair perusal, copying its Author's example while you gather up his sentiments, it will humble and yet exalt you; fill you with shame and contrition, and yet entice your affections out into adoration, like the chariots of a willing people.

Such is a mere outline of the Volume, it will speak more largely for itself; but we cannot conceal the rising presentiment, after surveying the whole, that these four precious memorials of the piety of other times, thus put together in one convenient portable volume, will be hailed by British Christians as a very valuable acquisition. Let them be sought after, however, not for ornament, but for use; not for the shelf, but for the closet and the heart; not for their connection with the times that are gone, but for their present worth. And let each of the excellent Authors have fruit from you in his own department.

There is one class of Christians with whom this Volume is sure to be high in esteem, and who can scarcely fail to peruse it, without a large accession of spiritual advantage. We mean the people who dwell alone, not from choice but necessity; who have been driven out of society by the wreck of their fortunes, or the infamous abuse of their reputation—or who have lived on amidst multiplying changes, till they have grown into solitude by the very course of nature, and find themselves in a world, which, although teeming with life, and warm with interest as that in which they started, is desolate to them, because time has altered its aspect, and death has taken out of it the friends of their youth—or, which is yet a more common case, who have been chastised into a weariness of the world, by bodily affliction, or the conduct of profligate relatives, or the heart-breaking sorrows of domestic bereavements, or, in some cases, it may be the pressure of all combined. These are a people who need a companion to abide with them in their dwellings, and mingle in quiet with their meditations, and avert their thoughts from fruitless anxieties, to that which is soothing and healthful. Many and varied are their sources of disquietude, bitter and pungent their secret sorrows, and powerfully affecting are their claims on the succours of Christian sympathy. We offer them this volume as a friend who loveth at all times, but *a brother born for adversity;* and we dare venture to say of it, in special reference to their case, that, although it cannot bring back the days that are gone, nor restore to their bosoms the terrestrial endearments which the course of provi-

dence has swept away, yet, by opening their hearts to a familiarity with its pages, and adopting it for their spiritual intimate, and gradually giving way to its upward attractions, it will distance, and thus diminish the ills of life, and gild, if not disperse the gloom which sits around them; and bring them to confess, with a great and tried Apostle, to the honour of God and their own unspeakable consolation, that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

D. Y.

Perth, *October*, 1827.

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WALKING WITH GOD

THE CHRISTIAN'S

DUTY AND PRIVILEGE.

BY

RICHARD BAXTER.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE AND EXEMPLARY

LADY ANNE,

COUNTESS OF BALCARRES.

MADAM,

IN the hope of pardon of my delay, I now present you with the treatise which, at your desire, I preached at your departure hence. I knew of many and great afflictions which you had undergone in the removal of your dearest friends, which made this subject seem so suitable and seasonable to you at that time: but I knew not that God was about to make so great an addition to your trials in the same kind, by taking to himself the principal branch of your noble family (by a rare disease, the emblem of the mortal malady now reigning).* I hope this loss also shall promote your gain, by keeping you nearer to your heavenly Lord, who is jealous of your affections, and resolved to have them entirely to himself: and then you will still find, that you are not alone, nor deprived of your dearest or most necessary friend, while the Father, the Son, the sanctifying and comforting Spirit is with you. And it should

* Charles, Earl of Balcarres, who died of a stone in his heart of a very great magnitude.

not be hard to reconcile us to the disposals of so sure a Friend. Nothing but good can come from God; however the blind may miscall it, who know no good or evil, but what is measured by the private standard of their selfish interest, and that as judged of by sense. Eternal love engaged by covenant to make us happy, will do nothing but what we shall find at last will terminate in that blessed end. He envied you not your son, as too good for you, or too great a mercy, who hath given you his own Son, and with him the mercy of eternal life. Corporal sufferings with spiritual blessings are the ordinary lot of believers here on earth: as corporal prosperity with spiritual calamity is the lot of the ungodly. And I beseech you consider, that God knoweth better than you or I, what an ocean your son was ready to launch out into, and how tempestuous and terrible it might have proved, and whether the world that he is saved from, would have afforded him more of safety or seduction, of comfort or calamity? Whether the protraction of the life of your noble husband, to have seen our sins and their effects and consequents, would have afforded him greater joy or sorrow? Undoubtedly as God had a better title to your husband, and children, and friends, than you had, so it is much better to be with him, than to be with you, or with the best or greatest upon earth. The heavenly inhabitants fear not our fears, and feel not our afflictions. They are past our dangers, and out of the reach of all our enemies, and delivered from our pains and cares, and have the full possession of all those mercies which we pray and labour for. Can you think your children and friends that are with

Christ, are not safer and better than those that yet remain with you? Do you think that earth is better than heaven for yourself? I take it for granted you cannot think so, and will not say so: and if it be worse for you, it is worse for them. The providence which, by hastening their glorification, doth promote your sanctification; which helpeth them to the end, and helpeth you in the way, must needs be good to them and you, however it appear to flesh and unbelief. O madam, when our Lord hath showed us (as he will shortly do) what a state it is to which he bringeth the spirits of the just, and how he doth there entertain and use them, we shall then be more competent judges of all those acts of Providence to which we are now so hardly reconciled! Then we shall censure our censurings of these works of God, and be offended with our offences at them, and call ourselves blind, unthankful sinners, for calling them so bad as we did in our misjudging unbelief and passions. We shall not wish ourselves or friends again on earth, among temptations and pains, and among uncharitable men, malicious enemies, deceitful flatterers, and untrusty friends! When we see that face which we long to see, and know the things which we long to feel, and are full of the joys which now we can scarce attain a taste of, and have reached the end which now we seek, and for which we suffer, we shall no more take it for a judgment to be taken from ungodly men, and from a world of sin, and fear, and sorrow; nor shall we envy the wicked, nor ever desire to be partakers of their pleasures. Till then, let us congratulate our departed friends the felicity which they have attained,

and which we desire; and let us rejoice with them that rejoice with Christ, and let us prefer the least believing thought of the everlasting joys, before all the defiled transitory pleasures of the deluded, dreaming, miserable world. And let us prefer such converse as we can here attain, with God in Christ, and with the heavenly society, before all the pomp and friendship of the world. We have no friend that is so able to supply all our wants, so sufficient to content us, so ready to relieve us, so willing to entertain us, so unwearied in hearing us, and conversing with us, as our blessed Lord. This is a Friend that will never prove untrusty; nor be changed by any change of interest, opinion, or fortune; nor give us cause to suspect his love: a Friend that we are sure will not forsake us, nor turn our enemy, nor abuse us for his own advantage, nor will ever die or be separated from us, but we shall be always with him, and see his glory, and be filled and transported with his love, and sing his praise to all eternity. With whom then should we so delightfully converse on earth? And till we can reach that sweet, delightful converse, whom should we seek with more ambition, or observe with greater devotedness and respect? O that we were less carnal and more spiritual, and lived less by sense, and more by faith; that we knew better the difference between God and man, between visible temporals, and invisible eternals! We should then have other thoughts and desires, and resolutions, and converse, and employments, and pleasures, than too many have!

Madam, it displeaseth me that it is no more ela-

borate a Treatise, to which the present opportunity inviteth me to prefix your name: but pardon the manner, and I dare commend the matter to you, as more worthy your serious contemplation, and your daily most delightful practice, than any other that was ever proposed to mortal man. This is the manlike noble life; the life which the rational soul was made for: to which, if our faculties be not by sanctifying grace restored, they fall below their proper dignity and use, and are worse than lost, like a prince or learned man that is employed only in sweeping dog-kennels, or tending swine. To walk in holiness with the most holy God, is the improvement and advancement of the nature of man, towards its designed equality with angels. When earthliness and sensuality degrade humanity into (a voluntary, and therefore sinful) brutishness; this is the life which affordeth the soul a solid and durable pleasure and content: when carnal minds evaporate into air, and bubble into froth and vanity, wasted in a dream, and the violent, busy pursuit of a shadow; deceiving themselves with a mixture of some counterfeit religion; playing with God, and working for the world; living in jest, and dying, and despairing, and suffering in earnest; with unwearied labour building on the sand, and sinking at death for want of a foundation; hating the serious practice of their own professed religion, because it is not the profession, but the serious practice which hath the greatest enmity to their sensual delights; yet wishing to be numbered with those hereafter, whom they hated here. This holy walking with the Most Holy God, is the only life which is best at last, and sweet in

the review; which the godly live in, and most of the ungodly could wish to die in; like him that wished to be Cæsar in life, and Socrates at death. Yea, this is the life which hath no end; which we are here but learning, and beginning to practise, and which we must hereafter live (in another manner and degree) with God for ever. O wondrous mercy! which thus ennobleth even the state of mortality! and honoureth earth with so much participation of, and communion with Heaven! That by God, and with God, we may walk in holy peace and safety unto God, and there be blessed in his perfect sight and love for ever! Madam, the greatest service I can do you for all your favours, is to pray that God will more acquaint you with himself, and lead you by this blessed way to that more blessed end; that when you see all worldly glory in the dust, you may bless him for ever, who taught you to make a wiser choice: which are the prayers of,

Madam,

Your very much obliged Servant,

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 24, 1662.

WALKING WITH GOD.

GENESIS v. 24.

AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD, AND HE WAS NOT; FOR GOD TOOK HIM.

CHAPTER I.

What it is to walk with God.

BEING to speak of our converse with God in solitude, I think it will not be unsuitable nor unserviceable to the ends of that discourse, if I here premise a short description of the general duty of practical godliness, as it is called in Scripture 'a walking with God.' It is here commended to us in the example of holy Enoch, whose excellency is recorded in this signal character, that "he walked with God;" and his special reward expressed in the words following, "and he was not, for God took him." I shall speak most of his character, and then somewhat of his reward.

The Samaritan and vulgar Latin versions strictly translate the Hebrew as we read it; but the inter-

pretation of the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Arabic, are rather good expositions (all set together) of the meaning of the word, than strict translations. The Septuagint and Syriac read it, 'Enoch pleased God.' The Chaldee hath, 'Enoch walked in the fear of God.' And the Arabic, 'he walked in obedience to God.' And indeed, to walk in the fear and obedience of God, and thereby to please him, is the principal thing in our "walking with God." The same character is given of Noah, in Gen. vi. 19. and the extraordinary reward annexed; he and his family were saved in the deluge. And the holy life which God commanded Abraham, is called 'a walking before God.' "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." and in the New Testament the Christian conversation is ordinarily called by the name of Walking. Sometimes a 'walking in Christ.' Sometimes a 'walking in the Spirit, in which we live.' And a 'walking after the Spirit.' Sometimes a 'walking in the light, as God is in the light.' Those that 'abide in Christ, must so walk even as he hath walked.' These phrases set together, tell us what it is to walk with God. But I think it not unprofitable somewhat more particularly to show you what this walking with God doth contain.

As atheism is the sum of wickedness, so all true religiousness is called by the name of godliness, or holiness, which is nothing else but our devotedness to God, and living to him, and our relation to him as thus devoted in heart and life. Practical atheism is a "living without God in the world." Godliness is contrary to practical atheism, and is a living with

and to God in the world and in the church, and is here called a walking with God. And it containeth in it these particulars.

1. To walk with God includeth the practical acknowledgment (that is made by the will as well as the understanding) of the grand attributes of God, and his relations to man; that he is infinite in his being, that is, immense and eternal; as also in his power, wisdom, and goodness: that he is the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: that he is our absolute Lord, our most righteous Governor, and most bountiful benefactor (or Father:) that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" that "in him we live, and move, and have our being:" that he is the fountain, or first cause, from which all (proper) being, truth and goodness in the creature, is but a derived stream. To have the soul unfeignedly resign itself to him, as his own; and subject itself to him as our Governor, walking in the awe of his sovereign power; sensible of the strong obligation of his laws, which reason, justice, and necessity, do all command us to obey. To live as in full dependence on him: to have the first and greatest respect to him: a more observant respect to him than to our rulers: a more obedient respect to him than to our masters: a more dependent, tender, and honourable respect to him than to parents, or our nearest friends. Thus "he that cometh to God" (as God, and so as to be accepted of him,) "must believe that he is," (his essential attributes) and (what he is in his relations to man, especially that as our Governor and benefactor) "he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The impress of a Deity in his essential and

relative attributes must be upon the heart of him that walks with God. Yea, the being of God must be much more remarkable to him, than the being of all creatures, and his presence more regarded than the presence of the creature; and all things must be to us in comparison of God as a candle is in comparison of the sun: his greatness and transcendent excellencies must so overpower them all, as to make them less observed and regarded, by his taking up our chief observation and regard.

2. Our walking with God includeth our reconciliation to him, and that we are not in our natural state of enmity, but made his children and friends in Christ. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Enmity is against unity; disaffection causeth aversion, and flying from each other: yea, the fears of a guilty child may make him fly from his father's presence, till there be a particular reconciliation, besides the general state of reconciliation. A provoking faulty child doth dwell with God his Father, though under the continual terror of his frowns; but to walk with him (in the full sense) is more than to be related to him, and to dwell with him. In a large sense, indeed, all God's children may be said to walk with him, as it signifieth only a conversation ordered in godliness, sincerity, and simplicity. But in this more sublime sense, as it signifieth a lively exercise of faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness, and a course of complacential contemplation, and holy converse with God, so it is proper only to some of the sounder and more vigilant industrious believers. And hereto it is necessary, not only that we be justified and reconciled to God

from our state of enmity, but also that we be pardoned, justified, and reconciled from our particular wounding falls, which are more than the ordinary infirmities of believers. And also it is necessary that we have grateful, friendly thoughts of God: that we have so much sense of his excellency, goodness, and kindness to ourselves, as may give us a complacency in conversing with him, and may make the thoughts and mention of him to be desirable and pleasing to us. Walking with God doth import, though not the full assurance of his special love and grace to us, yet such an apprehension of his love and goodness, as may draw the heart to think of him with desire, if not with delight. A loathness to draw near him, to think of him, or to mention him, a weariness of his special service, are contrary to this special walking with God.

3. Our walking with God, includes our esteeming and intending Him as the ultimate end and felicity of our souls. He is not to be sought, or loved, or conversed with, as a means to any greater good, (for there is no greater,) nor as inferior, or merely equal to any. His goodness must be the most powerful attractive of our love: his favour must be valued as our happiness; and the pleasing of him must be our most industrious employment. To walk with him, is to live in the warming, reviving sunshine of his goodness, and to feel a delighting, satisfying virtue in his love and gracious presence. To live as those that are not their own, and that have their lives, and faculties, and provisions, and helps for their master's service: as a horse or dog is of so much worth, as he is of use to him that owneth

him; and that is the best that is the most serviceable to his master: yet with this very great difference, that man being a more noble and capacious creature, is admitted not only into a state of service, but of sonship, and friendship, and communion with God; and is allowed and appointed to share more in the pleasure and fruits of his services, and to put in his own felicity and delight into his end; not only because self-love is natural and necessary to the creature, but also because he is under the promise of a reward; and, (more than either,) because he is a lover, and not only a servant, and his work is principally a work of love, and therefore his end is the end of a lover, which is mutual complacency in the exercises of love.

He that seeketh not first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and referreth not other things to him, but seeks first the creature, and God only for it, doth but deny God in his heart, and basely subject him to the works of his own hands, and doth not walk with God, but vilify and reject him. If you live not to God, even to obey, and please, and honour him, you do not walk with him, but walk contrary to him, (by living to his enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil,) and therefore God will "walk contrary to you." You were both created and redeemed, though for your own felicity, yet principally for the glory and pleasure of your Creator and Redeemer; and for no felicity of your own, but what consisteth in pleasing him, glorifying him, and enjoying him: "Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, it should all be done to the glory of God." He that regardeth a

day, or regardeth it not; he that eateth, or that eateth not, must do it to the Lord. And though a good intention will not sanctify a forbidden action, yet sins of ignorance and mere frailty are forborne and pardoned of God, when it is his glory and service that is sincerely intended, though there be a mistake in the choice of means. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Our walking with God is a serious "labouring, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." To this the love of our Redeemer must constrain us: "For he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." Religion, therefore, is called the seeking of God, because the soul doth press after him, and labour to enjoy him, as the runner seeks to reach the prize; or as a suitor seeketh the love and fruition of the person beloved. And all the particular acts of religion are oft denominated from this intention of the end, and following after it, and are all called "a seeking the Lord." Conversion is called "a seeking the Lord." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God." "They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him." Men that are called to conversion, are called to seek God. "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to

seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." The converted children of "Israel and Judah shall go weeping together to seek the Lord their God." The wicked are described to be men that "do not seek the Lord." The holy covenant was "to seek the Lord." If therefore you would walk with God, let him be the mark, the prize, the treasure, the happiness, the heaven itself which you aim at, and sincerely seek. "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." "Glory ye in his holy name. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face for evermore." As the life of a covetous man is a seeking of riches, and the life of an ambitious man is a seeking of worldly honour and applause, so the life of a man that liveth to God, is a seeking him; to please him, honour him, and enjoy him: and so much of this as he attaineth, so much doth he attain of satisfaction and content. If you live to God, and seek him as your end and all, the want of any thing will be tolerable to you, which is but consistent with the fruition of his love. If he be pleased, man's displeasure may be borne. The loss of all things, if Christ be won, will not undo us. Man's condemnation of us signifieth but little, if God the absolute Judge justify us. He walketh not with God, that liveth not to him as his only happiness and end.

4. Moreover our walking with God includeth our subjection to his authority, and our taking his wisdom and will to be our guide, and his laws in nature and Scripture for our rule. You must not walk with him as his equals, but as his subjects: nor give him

the honour of an ordinary superior, but of the universal King. In our doubts he must resolve us; and in our straits we must ask counsel of the Lord. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" is one of the first words of a penitent soul. When sensual worldlings do first ask the flesh, or those that can do it hurt or good, what they would have them be or do,—none of Christ's true subjects do call any man father or master on earth, but in subordination to their highest Lord. The authority of God doth awe them, and govern them more than the fear of the greatest upon earth. Indeed they know no power but God's, and that which he committeth to man. And therefore they can obey no man against God, whatever it cost them: but under God they are most readily and faithfully subject to their governors; not merely as to men that have power to hurt them if they disobey, but as to the officers of the Lord, whose authority they discern and reverence in them. But when they have to do with the enemies of Christ, who usurp a power which he never gave them against his kingdom and the souls of men, they think it easy to resolve the question, "Whether it be better to obey God or men?" As the commands of a rebellious constable, or other fellow-subject, are of no authority against the king's commands; so the commands of all the men on earth are of so small authority with them against the laws of God, that they fully approve of the ready and resolute answer of those witnesses, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, &c. But if not, be it known unto thee,

O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Worldlings are ruled by their fleshly interest, and wisdom, and self-will, and by the will of man so far as it doth comport with these. By these you may handle them and lead them up and down the world: by these doth Satan hold them in captivity. But believers feel themselves in subjection to a higher Lord, and better law, which they faithfully, though imperfectly, observe. Therefore our walking with God is called a " walking in his law;" a " walking in his statutes, and keeping and doing his commands;" " walking in his paths." It is our " following the Lamb, which way soever he goeth." To be given up to our own heart's lusts, and to walk in our counsels, is contrary to this holy walk with God, and is the course of those that are departed from him: and they that are far from him shall perish: he destroyeth those that go a whoring from him. But it is good for us to draw near to God.

5. Our walking with God doth imply that as we are ruled by his will, so we fear no punishment like his threatened displeasure: and that the threats of death from mortal men, will not prevail with us so much as his threats of hell. If God say, ' I will condemn thee to everlasting punishment if thou wilt not keep my laws;' and if men say, ' We will condemn thee to imprisonment or death if thou keep them,' the believer more feareth God than man. The law of the king doth condemn Daniel to the lions' den, if he forbear not to pray for a certain time. But he more feareth God, that will deny those that deny him, and forsake those that forsake

him. Therefore the forementioned witnesses ventured on the fiery furnace, because God threatened a more dreadful fire. Therefore a true believer dare not live, when an unbeliever dare not die: he dare not save his life from God, lest he lose it; but loseth it that he may save it. But unbelievers that walk not with God, but after the flesh, do most fear them that they observe most powerful in the world, and will more be moved with the penalty of some worldly loss or suffering, than with God's most dreadful threats of hell: for that which they see not, is to them as nothing, while they want that faith by which it is foreknown, and must be escaped.

6. Moreover, he that walks with God, doth from God expect his full reward. He ceaseth not his holy course, though no man observe him, or none commend him or approve him; though all about him hate him and condemn him; though he be so far from gaining by it with men, that it cost him all that he hath or hoped for in the world: for he knoweth that godliness is of itself great gain, and that it "hath the promise of this life and that to come," and none can make God's promise void. He knoweth that his "Father which seeth in secret will reward him openly;" and that he "shall have a treasure in heaven" that parteth with all on earth for Christ. And he hath such respect to this promised "recompence of reward," that for it he can "suffer with the people of God, and account the very reproach of Christ a greater treasure" than court or country can afford him in a way of sin. He accounteth them "blessed that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, because the kingdom of

heaven is theirs." He judgeth it a cause of exceeding joy, to be reviled and persecuted, and to have all manner of evil falsely spoken of us for the sake of Christ, because our reward in heaven is great. For he verily believeth, that as sure as these transitory pleasures will have an end, and everlastingly forsake those miserable souls that were deluded by them, so certainly is there a life of endless joys, to be possessed in heaven with God and all the holy ones; and this he will trust to as that which will fully repair his losses, repay his cost, and not deceive him. Let others trust to what they will, it is this that he is resolved to trust to, and venture all to make it sure (when he is sure that all is nothing which he ventureth, and that by the adventure he can never be a loser, nor ever save by choosing that which itself must perish.) Thus he that truly walks with God expecteth his reward from God, and with God, and thence is encouraged in all his duty, emboldened in all his conflicts, and upheld and comforted in his sufferings, when man is the rewarder (as well as the chief ruler) of the hypocrite, and earthly things are the poise and motives to his earthly mind.

7. Our walking with God importeth that as we expect our reward from him, so also that we take his promise as our security for that reward. Believing his word and trusting his fidelity to the quieting and emboldening of the soul, is part of our holy walking with him. A promise of God is greater satisfaction and encouragement to a true believer, than all the visible things on earth. A promise of God can do more, and prevail further with an upright soul, than

all the sensible objects in the world. He will do more, and go further upon such a promise, than he will for all that man can give him. Peruse the life of Christ's apostles, and see what a promise of Christ can do: how it made them forsake all earthly pleasures, possessions and hopes, and part with friends, and houses, and country, and travel up and down the world, in dangers and sufferings, and unwearied labours, despised and abused by great and small: and all this to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, which they had never seen, and to attain that everlasting happiness, and help others to attain it, for which they had nothing but the promise of their Lord. See what a promise well believed will make a Christian do and suffer. Believers did those noble acts, and the martyrs underwent those torments, which are mentioned Heb. xi. because " they judged him faithful that had promised." They considered not difficulties, and defect of means, and improbabilities as to second causes, nor " staggered at the promise of God through unbelief; but being strong in faith, gave glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform," as it is said of Abraham.

8. To walk with God is to live as in his presence, and that with desire and delight. When we believe and apprehend that wherever we are, we are before the Lord, who seeth our hearts and all our ways; who knoweth every thought we think, and every word we speak, and every secret thing which we do: as verily to believe that God is here present and observeth all, as we do that we ourselves are here. To compose our minds, our thoughts, our affections

to that holy reverence and seriousness as beseemeth man before his Maker. To order our words with that care and gravity as beseems those that speak in the hearing of the Lord. That no man's presence do seem more considerable to us than his presence: as we are not moved at the presence of a fly, or worm, or dog, when persons of honour and reverence are present, so should we not comparatively be moved at the presence of man, how great, or rich, or terrible soever, when we know that God himself is present, to whom the greatest of the sons of men are more inconsiderable than a fly or worm is to them. As the presence of the king makes ordinary standers by to be unobserved, and the discourses of the learned make us disregard the babblings of children; so the presence of God should make the greatest to be scarce observed or regarded in comparison of him. God, who is still with us, should so much take up our regard, that all others in his presence should be but as a candle in the presence of the sun. Therefore it is that a believer composeth himself to that behaviour which he knoweth God doth most expect, and beseemeth those that stand before him; when others accommodate themselves to the persons that are present, observing them, pleasing them, and showing them respect, while they take no notice of God at all, as if they believed not that he is there. Hence it is that the men of God were wont to speak (though reverently, yet) familiarly of God, as children of their father with whom they dwell, as being indeed fellow-citizens with the saints, who are his household. Abraham calleth him, " The Lord before whom I walk." And Jacob, " God before

whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked." And David resolveth, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Yea God himself is pleased to use the terms of gracious condescending familiarity with them. "Christ dwelleth in them by faith." His Spirit dwelleth in them as his house and temple. Yea the Father himself is said to dwell in them, and they in him, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Yea, God is said to walk in them, as they are said to walk with him; "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Our walking with God then is not only a sense of that common presence which he must needs afford to all; but it is also a believing apprehension of his gracious presence, as our God and reconciled Father, with whom we dwell, being brought near to him by Christ, who dwelleth in us by his Spirit.

9. To walk with God (as here we are in the flesh) includeth not only our believing his presence, but also that we see him (as the chief cause in the effects) in his creatures, and his daily providence, that we look not on creatures as independent or separated from God; but see them as the glass, and God as the represented face; and see them as the letters and

words, and God as the sense of all the creatures, that are the first book which he appointed man to read. We must behold his glory declared by the heavens, and see him shining in the sun; and see his power in the fabric of the world, and his wisdom in the admirable order of the whole; we must taste the sweetness of his love in the sweetness of our food, and in the comforts of our friends, and all our accommodations; we must see, and love his image in his holy ones; and we must hear his voice in the ministry of his messengers. Thus every creature must become a preacher to us, and we must see the name of God upon it: And thus all things will be sanctified to us, while "Holiness to the Lord" is written upon all. Though we must not therefore make idols of the creatures, because God appeareth to us in them, yet must we hear the message which they bring us, and reverence in them the name of the Creator which they bear. By this way of conversing with them, they will not ensnare us, or deceive, or poison us, as they do the carnal, unbelieving world: but as the fish brought money to Peter to pay his tribute, so every creature would bring us a greater, even a spiritual gain. When we behold it, we should say with pleasant admiration, "This is the work of God, and it is wonderful in our eyes." This is the true divine philosophy, which seeketh, and findeth, and contemplateth, and admireth the great Creator in his works: when that which sticketh in the creature itself (whatever discovery it seem to make) is but a childish, unprofitable trifling: like learning to shape all the letters aright, without learning to know their signification and

sense. It is God appearing in the creatures, that is the life, and beauty, and use, and excellency of all the creatures; without him they are but carcasses, deformed, useless, vain, insignificant, and very nothings.

10. Our walking with God contains our willing and sincere attendance on him in the use of those holy duties in which he hath appointed us to expect his grace. He is everywhere in his essential presence, but he is not everywhere alike to be found in the communications of grace. The assemblies of his saints that worship him in holy communion, are places where he is more likely to be found than in an alehouse or a playhouse. You are more likely to have holy converse with him among the holy, that will speak of holy things to your edification, than among the senseless, ignorant sensualists, and the scornful enemies of holiness, that are the servants of the devil, whom he useth in his daily work for the deceiving and perdition of the world. Therefore the conversation of the wicked doth grieve and vex the righteous soul, (as it is said the Sodomites did by Lot,) because all their conversation is ungodly, far from God, not savouring of any true knowledge of him, or love to him, but is against him by enmity and provocation. If God himself dwell and walk in all his holy ones, then they that dwell and walk with them, have the best opportunity to dwell and walk with God. To converse with those in whom God dwelleth, is to converse with him in his image, and to attend him at his dwelling: and wilfully to run among the wicked, is to run far away from God. "In his temple doth every man speak of his glory;"

when among his brutish enemies every man speaketh to the dishonour of him in his word and ways. He is otherwise present with those that are congregated in his name and for his worship, than he is with those that are assembled for wickedness or vanity, or live as brutes without God in the world. And we must draw as near him as we can, if we would be such as walk with God.

We must not be strange to him in our thoughts, but make him the object of our most serious meditations. It is said of the wicked, that "they are far from God;" and that God is not in all their thoughts." The thoughts are the mind's employment. It dwells on that which it frequently thinks of. It is a walk of the mind, and not of the body, which we are treating of. To mind the world, and fleshly things, is contrary to this walk with God: we are far from him when our thoughts are (ordinarily) far from him. I know that it is lawful and meet to think of the business of our callings, so far as is necessary to the prudent successful management of them, and that it is not requisite that our thoughts be always actually upon God; but he that doth manage his calling in holiness, doth all in obedience to God's commands, and sees that his work be the work of God, and he intendeth all to the glory of God, or the pleasing of his blessed will. And he oft reneweth these actual intentions, and oft interposeth thoughts of the presence, or power, or love, or interest, of him whom he is serving; he often lifteth up his soul in some holy desire or ejaculatory request to God; he often taketh occasion from what he seeth, or heareth, or is doing, for some more

spiritual meditation or discourse; so that still it is God that his mind is principally employed on or for, even in his ordinary work, (while he liveth as a Christian.)

And it is not enough to think of God; but we must think of him as God, with such respect, and reverence, and love, and trust, and submission (in our measure) as is due from the creature to his Creator. For as some kind of speaking of him is but a taking his name in vain, so some kind of thinking of him is but a dishonouring of him, by contemptuous, or false, unworthy thoughts. Most of our walking with God consisteth in such affectionate apprehensions of him, as are suitable to his blessed attributes and relations. All the day long our thoughts should be working either on God, or for God; either upon some work of obedience which he hath appointed to us, and in which we desire to please and honour him, or else directly upon himself. Our hearts must be taken up in contemplating and admiring him, in magnifying his name, his word and works; and in pleasant, contentful thoughts of his benignity and of his glory, and the glory which he conferreth on his saints. He that is unskilful, or unable, to manage his own thoughts, with some activity, seriousness, and order, will be a stranger to much of the holy converse which believers have with God. They that have given up the government of their thoughts, and turned them loose, to go which way phantasy pleaseth, and present sensitive objects invite them, and to run up and down the world as masterless, unruly vagrants, can hardly expect to keep them in any constant attendance upon God, or

readiness for any sacred work. And the sudden thoughts which they have of God, will be rude and stupid, savouring more of profane contempt than of holiness, when they should be reverent, serious, affectionate, and practical, and such as conduce to a holy composure of their hearts and lives.

And as we must walk with God, 1. In our communion with his servants; 2. And in our affectionate meditations; so also, 3. In all the ordinances which he hath appointed for our edification and his worship.

1. The reading of the word of God, and the explication and application of it in good books, is a means to possess the mind with sound, and orderly, and working, apprehensions of God, and of his holy truths: so that in such reading our understandings are oft illuminated with a heavenly light, and our hearts are touched with a special delightful relish of that truth, and they are secretly attracted and engaged to God, and all the powers of our souls are excited and animated to a holy, obedient life.

2. The same word, preached with a lively voice, with clearness and affection, hath a greater advantage for the same illumination and excitation of the soul. When a minister of Christ, that is truly a divine, being filled with the knowledge and love of God, shall copiously and affectionately open to his hearers, the excellencies which he hath seen, and the happiness which he hath foreseen and tasted of himself, it frequently (through the co-operation of the Spirit of Christ) doth wrap up the hearers' hearts to God, and bring them into a more lively knowledge of him, actuating their graces, and inflaming their hearts with a heavenly love, and such desires as God hath promised

to satisfy. Christ doth not only send his ministers furnished with authority from him, but also furnished with his Spirit, to speak of spiritual things in a spiritual manner; so that in both respects he might say, "He that heareth you, heareth me;" and also, by the same Spirit, doth open and excite the hearts of the hearers: so that it is God himself that a serious Christian is principally employed with, in the hearing of his heavenly, transforming word; and therefore he is affected with reverence and holy fear, with some taste of heavenly delight, with obediential subjection and resignation of himself to God. The word of God is powerful, not only in pulling down all high, exalting thoughts, that rise up against God, but also in lifting up depressed souls, that are unable to rise to heavenly knowledge, or communion with God. If some Christians could but always find as much of God upon their hearts at other times, as they find sometimes under a spiritual, powerful ministry, they would not so complain, that they seem forsaken, and strangers to all communion with God, as many of them do. While God, by his messengers and Spirit, is speaking, and man is hearing him; while God is treating with man about his reconciliation and everlasting happiness, and man is seriously attending to the treaty and motions of his Lord, surely this is a very considerable part of our walking and converse with God.

3. Also, in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we are called to a familiar converse with God. He there appeareth to us, by a wonderful condescension, in the representing, communicating, signs of the flesh and blood of his Son, in which he

hath most conspicuously revealed his love and goodness to believers; there Christ himself, with his covenant-gifts, are all delivered to us, by these investing signs of his own institution; even as knighthood is given by a sword, and as a house is delivered by a key, or land by a twig and turf. Nowhere is God so near to man, as in Jesus Christ; and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in this holy sacrament. Here we are called to sit with him at his table, as his invited welcome guests; to commemorate his sacrifice, to feed upon his very flesh and blood; that is, with our mouths upon his representative flesh and blood, and with our applying faith upon his real flesh and blood, by such a feeding as belongs to faith. The marriage-covenant, betwixt God incarnate, and his espoused ones, is there publicly sealed, celebrated, and solemnized. There we are entertained by God as friends, and not as servants only, and that at the most precious costly feast. If ever a believer may on earth expect his kindest entertainment, and near access, and an humble intimacy with his Lord, it is in the participation of his sacrifice-feast, which is called "the Communion;" because it is appointed, as well for our special communion with Christ, as with one another. It is here that we have the fullest intimation, expression, and communication, of the wondrous love of God; and therefore it is here that we have the loudest call, and best assistance, to make a large return of love; and where there is most of this love between God and man, there is most communion, and most of heaven, that can be had on earth.

But it much concerneth the members of Christ,

that they deprive not themselves of this communion with God, in this holy sacrament, through their miscarriage; which is too frequently done by one of these extremes. Either by rushing upon holy things with a presumptuous, careless, common frame of heart, as if they knew not that they go to feast with Christ, and discerned not his body: or else by an excess of fear, drawing back, and questioning the good-will of God, and thinking diminutively of his love and mercy. By this means, Satan depriveth many of the comfortable part of their communion with God, both in this sacrament, and in other ways of grace; and maketh them avoid him as an enemy, and be loath to come into his special presence; and even to be afraid to think of him, to pray to him, or to have any holy converse with him; when the just belief and observation of his love would establish them, and revive their souls with joy, and give them experience of the sweet delights which are opened to them in the Gospel, and which believers find in the love of God, and the foretaste of the everlasting pleasures.

4. In holy, faithful, fervent prayer, a Christian hath very much of his converse with God. For prayer is our approach to God, and calling to mind his presence and his attributes, and exercising all his graces in a holy motion towards him, and an exciting all the powers of our souls to seek him, attend him, and reverently to worship him. It is our treating with him about the most important businesses in all the world; a begging of the greatest mercies, and a deprecating his most grievous judgments; and all this with the nearest familiarity that man in flesh

can have with God. In prayer, the Spirit of God is working up our hearts to him, with desires expressed in sighs and groans; it is a work of God as well as of man; he bloweth the fire, though it be our hearts that burn and boil. In prayer we lay hold on Jesus Christ, and plead his merits and intercession with the Father; he taketh us, as it were, by the hand, and leadeth us to God, and hideth our sins, and procureth our acceptance, and presenteth us amiable to his Father, having justified and sanctified us, and cleansed us from these pollutions, which rendered us loathsome and abominable. To speak to God in secret prayer, is a work so high, and of so great moment, that it calleth off our minds from all things else, and giveth no creature room, or leave, to look into the soul, or once to be observed. The mind is so taken up with God, and employed with him, that creatures are forgotten, and we take no notice of them, (unless when, through the diversions of the flesh, our prayers are interrupted and corrupted, and so far degenerate, and are no prayer; so far, I say, as we thus turn away from God.) So that the soul that is most and best at prayer, is most and best at walking with God, and hath most communion with him in the Spirit. And to withdraw from prayer, is to withdraw from God; and to be unwilling to pray, is to be unwilling to draw near to God. Meditation or contemplation is a duty in which God is much enjoyed; but prayer hath meditation in it, and much more. All that is upon the mind in meditation, is upon the mind in prayer, and that with great advantage, as being presented before God, and pleaded with him, and so animated by the apprehen-

sions of his observing presence, and actuated by the desires and pleadings of the soul. When we are commanded to pray, it includeth a command to repent, and believe, and fear the Lord, and desire his grace. For faith, and repentance, and fear, and desire, are altogether in action in a serious prayer; and, as it were, naturally each one takes its place, and there is a holy order in the acting of these graces in a Christian's prayers, and a harmony which he doth seldom himself observe. He that in meditation knoweth not how to be regular and methodical, when he is studiously contriving and endeavouring it, yet in prayer before he is aware, hath repentance, and faith, and fear, and desire, and every grace, fall in its proper place and order, and contribute its part to the performance of the work. The new nature of a Christian is more immediately and vigorously operative in prayer, than in many other duties: and therefore every infant in the family of God can pray, (with groaning desires, and ordered graces, if not with well-ordered words.) When Paul began to live to Christ, he began (aright) to pray: "Behold he prayeth," saith God to Ananias. And "because they are sons, God sends the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his elect, even the Spirit of adoption, by which they cry Abba, Father," as children naturally cry to their parents for relief. And nature is more regular in its works than art or human contrivance is. Necessity teacheth many a beggar to pray better for relief to men, than many learned men (that feel not their necessities) can pray to God. The Spirit of God is a better methodist than we are. And though I know that we are bound to use

our utmost care and skill for the orderly actuating of each holy affection in our prayers, and not pretend the sufficiency of the Spirit for the patronage of our negligence or sloth, (for the Spirit makes use of our understandings for the actuating of our wills and affections;) yet withal it cannot be denied, but that it was upon a special reason that the Spirit that is promised to believers, is called a "Spirit of grace and supplication." And that it is given us to "help our infirmities," even the infirmities of our understanding, when "we know not what to pray for as we ought." And that the Spirit itself is said to "make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is not the Spirit without that is here meant: such intercession is no where ascribed to that. How then is the prayer of the Spirit within us distinguished from our prayer? Not as different effects of different causes; as different prayers by these different parties. But as the same prayer proceeding from different causes, having a special force (for quality and degree) as from one cause (the Spirit), which it hath not from the other cause (from ourselves), except as received from the Spirit. The Spirit is a new nature, or fixed inclination in the saints; for their very self-love, and will to good, is sanctified in them, which works so readily, though voluntarily, as that it is in a sort by the way of nature, though not excluding reason and will; and not as the motion of the brutish appetite. And that God is their felicity, and the only help and comfort of their souls, and so the principal good to be desired by them is become to them a truth so certain, and beyond all doubt, that their understand-

ings are convinced, that to love good, and to love God, are words that have almost the same signification; and therefore here is no room for deliberation and choice, where there is nothing but unquestionable good. A Christian, so far as he is such, cannot choose but desire the favour and fruition of God in immortality, even as he cannot choose (because he is a man) but desire his own felicity in general. And as he cannot (as a man) but be unwilling of destruction, and cannot but fear apparent misery, and that which bringeth it; so as a Christian he cannot choose but be unwilling of damnation, and of the wrath of God, and of sin as sin, and fear the apparent danger of his soul, so that his new nature will presently cast his fear, and repentance, and desires, into their proper course and order, and set them on work on their several objects, (about the main unquestionable things, however they may err, or need more deliberation about things doubtful.) The new creature is not as a lifeless engine (as a clock, or watch, or ship), where every part must be set in order by the art and hand of man, and so kept and used; but it is more like the frame of our own nature, even like man who is a living engine, when every part is set in its place and order by the Creator, and hath in itself a living and harmonical principle, which disposeth it to action, and to regular action, and is so to be kept in order and daily exercise by ourselves, as yet to be principally ordered and actuated by the Spirit which is the principal cause.

By all which you may understand how the Holy Ghost is in us a Spirit of supplication, and helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us to pray, and inter-

cedeth in us; and also that prayer is to the new man so natural a motion of the soul towards God, that much of our walking with God is exercised in this holy duty; and that it is to the new life as breathing to our natural life, and therefore no wonder that we are commanded to "pray continually," as we must breathe continually; or as nature which needeth a daily supply of food for nourishment, hath a daily appetite to the food which it needeth, so hath the spiritual nature to its necessary food, and nothing but sickness doth take it off.

And thus I have showed how our walking with God, containeth a holy use of his appointed means.

11. To walk with God includeth our dependance on him for our receivings, and taking our mercies as from his hand. To live as upon his love and bounty; as children with their father, that can look for nothing but from him. As the eye of a servant, yea, of a craving dog, is upon his master's face and hand, so must our eye be on the Lord, for the gracious supply of all our wants. If men give us any thing, we take them but as the messengers of God, by whom he sendeth it us. We will not be unthankful to men; but we thank them but for bringing us our Father's gifts. Indeed man is so much more than a mere messenger, that his own charity also is exercised in the gift. A mere messenger is to do no more but obediently to deliver what is sent us, and he need not exercise any charity of his own; and we owe him thanks only for his fidelity and labour, but only to his master for the gift. But God will so far honour man, as that he shall be called also to use his charity, and distribute his master's gifts

with some self-denial; and we owe him thanks as under God, he partaketh in the charity of the gift; and as one child oweth thanks to another, who both in obedience to the father, and love to his brother, doth give some part of that which his father had given him before. But still it is from our Father's bounty, as the principal cause that all proceeds. Thus Jacob speaketh of God, " God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," &c. When he had mentioned his father Abraham and Isaac's walking with God, he describeth his own by his dependance upon God, and receiving from him, acknowledging him the God that had fed him, and delivered him all his life. Carnal men that live by sense, depend upon inferior sensible causes; and though they are taught to pray to God, and thank him with their tongues, it is indeed their own contrivances and industry, or their visible benefactors, which their hearts depend upon and thank. It were a shame to them to be so plain as Pharaoh, and to say, " Who is the Lord?" or to speak as openly as Nebuchadnezzar, and say, " Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power," &c. Yet the same atheism and self-idolizing is in their hearts, though it be more modestly and cunningly expressed. Hence it is that they that walk with God, have all their receivings sanctified to them, and have in all a divine and spiritual sweetness, which those that take them but as from creatures, never feel or understand.

12. Lastly, It is contained in our walking with

God, that the greatest business of our lives be with him, and for him. It is not a walk for compliment or recreation only, that is here meant; but it is a life of nearness, converse, and employment, as a servant or child that dwelleth with his master or father in the house. God should be always so regarded, that man should stand by as nothing, and be scarce observed in comparison of him. We should begin the day with God, and entertain him in the first and sweetest of our thoughts. We should walk abroad and do our works as in his sight. We must resolve to do no work but his, no not in our trades and ordinary callings. We must be able to say, It is the work which my Master set me to do, and I do it to obey and please his will. At night we must take an account of ourselves, and spread open that account before him, desiring his acceptance of what was well, and his pardon for what we did amiss, that we may thus be ready for our last account. In a word, though men be our fellow-labourers and companions, yet the principal business of our care and diligence must be our Master's service in the world. And therefore we must look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving him, and of the best improvement of his talents; and must make it our daily study and business, to do him the greatest service we are able, whatever it may cost us through the malice of the enemies, being sure our labour shall not be in vain, and that we cannot serve him at too dear a rate. It is not as idle companions, but as servants, as soldiers, as those that put forth all their strength, to do his work and reach the crown, that we are called to walk with God. And all this is

done, though not in the same degree by all, yet according to the measure of their holiness, by every one that lives by faith.

CHAP. II.

The Manner of Walking with God.

HAVING told you what it is to walk with God, as to the matter of it, I shall more briefly tell you as to the manner. The nature of God, of man, and of the work, will tell it you.

1. That our walk with God must be with the greatest reverence: were we ever so much assured of his special love to us, and never so full of faith and joy, our reverence must be never the less for this. Though love cast out that guilty fear which discourageth the sinner from hoping and seeking for the mercy which would save him, and which disposeth him to hate and fly from God, yet doth it not cast out that reverence of God which we owe him as his creatures, so infinitely below him as we are. It cannot be that God should be known and remembered as God, without some admiring and awful apprehensions of him. Infiniteness, omnipotency, and inaccessible majesty and glory, must needs affect the soul that knoweth them, with reverence and self-abasement. Though "we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved," yet if we will "serve God acceptably," we must "serve him with reverence and godly fear," as knowing he "is our God," so he is

also a " consuming fire." We must so worship him as those that remember that we are worms and guilty sinners, and that he is most high and holy, and will be " sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified." Irreverence showeth a kind of atheistical contempt of God, or else a sleepiness and inconsiderateness of the soul. The sense of the goodness and love of God, must consist with the sense of his holiness and omnipotency. It is presumption, pride, or blockish stupidity, which excludeth reverence; which faith doth cause and not oppose.

2. Our walking with God must be a work of humble boldness and familiarity. The reverence of his holiness and greatness, must not overcome or exclude the sense of his goodness and compassion, nor the full assurance of faith and hope. Though by sin we are enemies and strangers to God, and stand afar off, yet in Christ we are reconciled to him, and brought near. " For he is our peace, who hath taken down the partition, and abolished the enmity, and reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God." " And through him we have all an access to the Father by one Spirit. We are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." " In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the belief of him." Though of ourselves we are unworthy to be called his children, and may well stand afar off with the publican, and not dare to lift up our faces towards heaven, but smite our breasts, and say, " O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Yet " have we boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus,

by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having an High Priest over the house of God, we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Therefore whensoever we are afraid at the sight of sin and justice, let us remember that "we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God. And therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He that alloweth us to walk with him, doth allow us such humble familiarity as beseemeth those that walk together with him.

3. Our walking with God must be a work of some holy pleasure and delight. We may willingly be dragged into the presence of an enemy, and serve as drudges upon mere necessity or fear. But walking together is the loving and delightful converse of friends. When we take sweet counsel of the Lord, and set him always at our right hand, and are glad to hear from him, and glad to speak to him, and glad to withdraw our thoughts from all the things and persons in the world, that we may solace ourselves in the contemplations of his excellency, and the admiration of his love and glory, this is indeed to walk with God. You converse with him as with a stranger, an enemy, or your destroyer, and not as with God, while you had rather be far from him, and only tremble in his presence, and are glad when you have done and are got away, but have no delight or pleasure in him. If we can take delight in our walking with a friend, a friend that is truly loving and constant, a friend that is learned, wise and holy!

if their wise and heavenly discourse be better to us than our recreations, meat, or drink, or clothes! What delight then should we find in our secret converse with the most high, most wise and gracious God! How glad should we be to find him willing and ready to entertain us! How glad should we be that we may employ our thoughts on so high and excellent an object! What cause have we to say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord." "In the multitude of my thoughts within me (my sorrowful, troublesome, weary thoughts) thy comforts do delight my soul." Let others take pleasure in childish vanity or sensuality, but say thou as David, "I have rejoiced in the ways of thy commandments, as much as in all riches: I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways: I will delight myself in thy statutes, and will not forget thy word. I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." Let "scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge," but "make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight." If thou wouldst experimentally know the safety and glory of a holy life, "delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart." Especially when we draw near him in his solemn worship, and when we separate ourselves on his holy days from all our common worldly thoughts, to be conversant, as in heaven, with the blessed God; then we may with the holy Apostle, be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." "And if we turn away our foot from the Sabbath, from doing our pleasure on that holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy

of the Lord, honourable, and shall honour him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord," and understand how great a privilege it is, to have the liberty of those holy days and duties, for our sweet and heavenly converse with God.

4. Our walking with God must be a matter of industry and diligence. It is not an occasional idle converse, but a life of observance, obedience, and employment, that this phrase importeth. The sluggish, idle wishes of the hypocrite, whose hands refuse to labour, are not this walking with God; nor "the sacrifice of fools," who are hasty to utter the overflowings of their fantasy before the Lord, while they "keep not their foot, nor hearken to the law, nor consider that they do evil." "He that cometh to God, and will walk with him, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him: God is with you while you are with him, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you." "Up, and be doing, and the Lord will be with you." If you would meet with God in the way of mercy, "take diligent heed to do the commandment and law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul."

5. Our walking with God is a matter of some constancy; it signifieth our course and trade of life, and not some accidental action by the by. A man may walk with a stranger for a visit, or in compliment, or upon some unusual occasion; but this walk with God, is the act of those that dwell with him in his

family, and do his work. It is not only to step and speak with him, or cry to him for mercy in some great extremity, or to go to church for company or custom, or think or talk of him sometimes heartlessly by the by, as a man will talk of news, or matters that are done in a foreign land, or of persons that we have little to do with: but it is to "be always with him." "To seek first his kingdom and righteousness." "Not to labour (comparatively) for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." "To delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate in it day and night." That his "words be in our hearts, and that we teach them diligently to our children, and talk of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, lying down, rising up," &c. That "we pray continually." "And in all things give thanks." But "will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty, or will he always call upon God?" "His goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away."

So much for the description of this "walking with God."

CHAP. III.

Reasons for Walking with God.

We are next to consider how far this doctrine doth concern ourselves, and what use we have to make of it upon our hearts and lives.

And First, It acquainteth us with the abundance of atheism that is in the world, even among those that profess the knowledge of God. It is atheism, not only to say, "There is no God," but to say so "in the heart;" while the heart is no more affected towards him, observant of him, or confident in him, or submissive to him, than if indeed there were no God. When there is nothing of God upon the heart, no love, no fear, no trust, no subjection, this is heart-atheism. When men that have some kind of knowledge of God, yet glorify him not "as God, nor are thankful to him, but become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened;" these men are heart-atheists; "and professing themselves wise, they become fools, and are given up to vile affections. And as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, (however they may discourse of him, so) God oft giveth them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity," &c. Swarms of such atheists go up and down under the self-deceiving name of Christians: being indeed unbelieving and defiled, so void of purity that they deride it, and "nothing is pure to them; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God, but they deny him in their works, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." What are they but atheists, when "God is not in all their thoughts," unless it be in their impious or blaspheming thoughts, or in their slight, contemptuous thoughts! To take God for

God indeed, and for our God, essentially includeth the taking him to be the most powerful, wise and good, the most just and holy, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the world, whom we, and all men, are obliged absolutely to obey and fear, to love and desire, whose will is our beginning, rule, and end. He that taketh not God for such as here described, taketh him not for God, and therefore, is indeed an atheist; what name soever he assumeth to himself, this is the name that God will call him by, even a "fool that hath said in his heart there is no God; while they are corrupt and do abominably, they understand not, and seek not after God; they are all gone aside, and are altogether become filthy, there is none of them that doth good; they are workers of iniquity, they have no knowledge, and eat up the people of God as bread, and call not upon the Lord." Ungodliness is but the English for atheism. The atheist, or ungodly in opinion, is he that thinks that there is no God, or that he is one that we need not love and serve, (and that is but the same, namely, to be no God.) The atheist, or ungodly in heart or will, is he that consenteth not that God shall be his God, to be loved, feared, and obeyed, before all. The atheist in life, or outward practice, is he that liveth as without God in the world; that seeketh him not as his chief good; and obeyeth him not as his highest absolute Lord; so that indeed atheism is the sum of all iniquity, as godliness is the sum of all religion and moral good. If you see by the description which I have given you, what it is to be godly, and to walk with God, and what it is to be an atheist, or ungodly, you may

easily see that godliness is more rare, and atheism more common, than many that themselves are atheists will believe. It is not that which a man calls his God, that is taken by him for his God indeed. It is not the tongue, but the heart that is the man. Pilate called Christ the King of the Jews, when he crucified him. The Jews called God their Father, when Christ telleth them, they were of their father the devil, and proveth it, because (whatever they said) they would do their lusts. The same Jews pretended to honour the name of the Messiah, and expect him, while they kill him. The question is not what men call themselves, but what they are; not whether you say you take God for your God, but whether you do so indeed. Not whether you profess yourselves to be atheists, but whether you are atheists indeed or not. If you are not, look over what I have here said, and ask your consciences, Do you walk with God? who is it you submit yourselves willingly to be disposed of by? to whom are you most subject? and whose commands have the most effectual authority with you? who is the chief governor of your hearts and lives? whom is it that you principally desire to please? whom do you most fear? and whose displeasure do you principally avoid? from whom is it that you expect your greatest reward? and in whom, and with whom, do you place and expect your happiness? whose work is it that you do, as the greatest business of your lives? Is it the goodness of God in himself, and unto you, that draweth up your hearts to him in love? Is he the ultimate end of the main intentions, design, and industry of your lives? Do you trust upon his

word as your security for your everlasting hopes and happiness? Do you study and observe him in his works? Do you really live as in his presence? Do you delight in his word, and meditate on it? Do you love the communion of saints? and to be most frequent and familiar with them that are most frequent and familiar with Christ? Do you favour more the particular affectionate discourse about his nature, will, and kingdom, than the frothy talk of empty wits, or the common discourse of carnal worldlings? Do you love to be employed in thanking him for his mercies, and in praising him, and declaring the glory of his attributes and works? Is your dependance on him as your great Benefactor, and do you receive your mercies as his gifts? If thus your principal observation be of God, and your chief desire after God, and your chief confidence in God, and your chief business in the world be with God, and for God, and your chief joy be in the favour of God, (when you can apprehend it) and in the prosperity of his church, and your hopes of glory; and your chief grief and trouble be your sinful distance from him, and your backwardness and disability in his love and service, and the fear of his displeasure, and the injuries done to his Gospel and honour in the world; then I must needs say, you are savingly delivered from your atheism and ungodliness; you do not only talk of God, but walk with God; you are then acquainted with that spiritual life and work, which the sensual world is unacquainted with, and with those invisible, everlasting excellencies, which if worldlings knew, they would change their minds, and choice, and pleasures. You are then acquainted

with that rational, manly, saint-like life, which ungodly men are strangers to; and you are in the way of that well-grounded hope and peace to which all the pleasures and crowns on earth, if compared, are but cheats and misery. But if you were never yet brought to walk with God, do not think you have a sound belief in God, nor that you acknowledge him sincerely, nor that you are saved from heart-atheism; nor is it piety in the opinion and the tongue, that will save him that is an atheist, or ungodly in heart and life. Divinity is an affective-practical science. Knowing is not the ultimate or perfect art of man; but a means to holy love, and joy, and service. Nor is it clear and solid knowledge, if it do not somewhat affect the heart, and engage and actuate the life, according to the nature and use of the thing known. The soundness of knowledge and belief, is not best discerned in the intellectual acts themselves, but in their powerful, free, and pleasant efficacy, upon our choice and practice. By these, therefore, you must judge, whether you are godly or atheistical. The question is not what your tongues say of God, nor what complimental ceremonious observances you allow him, but what your hearts and your endeavours say of him, and whether you glorify him as God, when you say you know him; otherwise you will find that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

And now, alas! what matter of lamentation is here before us! To see how seriously men converse with one another; and how God is overlooked or neglected by the most! How men live together,

as if there were more that is considerable and regardable in these particles of animated dust, than in the Lord Almighty, and in all his graces, service, and rewards! To see how God is cast aside, and his interest made to give place to the interest of the flesh, and his services must stay till men have done their service to their lusts, or to worldly men, that can do them hurt, or show them favour! And his will must not be done, when it crosseth the will of sinful man! How little do all the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God signify, with these atheistical men, in comparison of their lusts, or the laws of men, or any thing that concerneth their temporal prosperity! O how is the world revolted from their Maker! How have they lost the knowledge of themselves, and forgotten their natures, capacities and obligations, and what it is to be indeed a man! O! hearken, sinners, to the call of your Redeemer! Return, O seduced, wandering souls, and know at last your resting place! Why is not God in all your thoughts: or why is he thought on with so much remissness, unwillingness, and contempt! and with so little pleasure, seriousness, or regard? Do you understand yourselves in this? Do you deal worthily with God? or wisely for yourselves? Do you take more pleasure, with the prodigal, to feed swine, and to feed with swine, than to dwell at home with your heavenly Father? and to walk before him, and serve him in the world? Did you but know how dangerous a way you have been in, and how unreasonably you have dealt, to forsake God in your hearts, and follow that which cannot profit you, what haste would you make to leave the

crowd, and come home to God, and try a more noble and gainful conversation? If reasons may have room and leave to work upon you, I will set a few before you more distinctly, to call you off from your barren, inordinate creature-converse, to a believing, serious converse with God.

1. The higher and more excellent the object is (especially when it is also of most concern to ourselves,) the more excellent is the converse. Therefore, as nothing dare compare itself with God, so no employment may be compared with this of holy walking with him. How vile a contempt is it of the Almighty, and of our celestial joys, for the heart to neglect them, and turn away, and dwell upon vanity and trouble, and let these highest pleasures go! Is not God and glory worthy of thy thoughts, and all thy service?

2. What are those things that take thee up? Are they better than God? or fitter to supply thy wants? If thou think, and trust in them accordingly, ere long thou shalt know better what they are, and have enough of thy cursed choice and confidence. Tell those that stand by thee at the parting hour, whether thou didst choose aright and make a gaining or a saving match. O poor sinners! have you not yet warning enough to satisfy you that all things below are vanity and vexation, and that all your hope of happiness is above? Will not the testimony of God satisfy you? Will not the experience of the world for so many thousand years together satisfy you? Will not the ill success of the damned satisfy you? Will nothing but your own experience convince you? If so, consider well the experience you

have already made, and seasonably retire, and try no further, and trust not so dangerous a deceiver to the last, lest you buy your knowledge at a dearer rate than you will now believe.

3. You have daily more to do with God, than with all the world, whether you will or no: and therefore seeing you cannot avoid him if you would, prefer that voluntary obediential converse, which hath a reward, before that necessitated converse, which hath none. You are always in his hands: he made you for his service; and he will dispose of you and all that you have, according to his will. It shall not go with you as yourselves would have it, nor as your friends would have it, nor as princes and great ones of the world would have it; (unless as their wills comply with God's;) but as God would have it, who will infallibly accomplish all his will. If a sparrow fall not to the ground without him, and all the hairs of our heads are numbered, then certainly he overruleth all your interests and affairs, and they are absolutely at his disposal. To whom then in reason should you so much apply yourselves as to him? If you will not take notice of him, he will take notice of you: he will remember you, whether you remember him or not; but it may be with so strict and severe a remembrance, as may make you wish he did quite forget you. You are always in his presence; and can you then forget him, and hold no voluntary converse with him, when you stand before him? If it be but mean, inferior persons that we dwell with, and are still in company with, we mind them more, and speak more to them, than we do to greater persons that we seldom see. But

in God there is both greatness and nearness to invite you. Should not all the worms on earth stand by, while the glorious God doth call you to him, and offer you the honour and happiness of his converse? Shall the Lord of heaven and earth stand by, and be shut out, while you are chatting or trifling with his creatures? Nay, shall he be neglected that is always with you? You cannot remove yourselves a moment from his sight; and, therefore, you should not shut your eyes, and turn away your face, and refuse to observe him who is still observing you.

Moreover, your dependence, both for soul and body, is all on him: you can have nothing desirable but by his gift. He feeds you, he clotheth you, he maintaineth you, he gives you life, and breath, and all things; and yet can you overlook him, or forget him? Do not all his mercies require your acknowledgment? A dog will follow him that feedeth him: his eye will be upon his master: and shall we live upon God, and yet forget and disregard him? We are taught a better use of his mercies by the holy prophet; "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved!"

Nay, it is not yourselves alone, but all the world that depends on God. It is his power that supporteth them, and his will that disposeth of them, and his bounty that provideth for them; and therefore he must be the observation and admiration of the world. It is less unreasonable to take no notice of the earth that beareth us and yieldeth us fruit, and of the sun that yieldeth us heat and light, than

to disregard the Lord that is more to us than sun, and earth, and all things. "The eyes of all things wait on him; and he giveth them their meat in season. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. All his works, therefore, shall praise him, and his saints shall bless him: they shall speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power."

Moreover, God is so abundantly and wonderfully represented to us in all his works, as will leave us under the guilt of most inexcusable contempt, if we overlook him, and live as without him in the world. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." Thus "that which may be known of God is manifest; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that the ungodly are without excuse." Cannot you see that which all the world revealeth; nor hear that which all the world proclaimeth? "O sing ye forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious! Say to the Lord, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee: they shall sing unto thy name. Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men." Can we pass him by, that is every where present, and by every creature represented to us? Can we

forget him, when all the world are our remembrancers? Can we stop our ears against the voice of heaven and earth? Can we be ignorant of him, when the whole creation is our teacher? Can we overlook that holy, glorious name, which is written so legibly upon all things that ever our eyes beheld, that nothing but blindness, sleepiness, or distraction, could possibly keep us from discerning it! I have many a time wondered, that, as the eye is dazzled so with the beholding of the greatest light, that it can scarce perceive the shining of a lesser, so the glorious transcendent majesty of the Lord doth not even overwhelm our understandings, and so transport and take us up, as that we scarce observe or remember any thing else. For naturally the greatest objects of our sense, are apt to make us at that time insensible of the smaller; and our exceeding great business, is apt to make us utterly neglect and forget those that are exceedingly small. And O what nothings are the best and greatest of the creatures, in comparison of God! And what toys and trifles are all our other businesses in the world, in comparison of the business which we have with him! But I have been stopped in these admirations, by considering, that the wise Creator hath fitted and ordered all his creatures according to the use which he designeth them to. And therefore as the eye must be receptive only of so much light as is proportioned to its use and pleasure, and must be so distant from the sun, that its light may rather guide, than blind us, and its heat may rather quicken, than consume us; so God hath made our understandings capable of no other knowledge of him here, than

what is suited to the work of holiness. And while we have flesh, and fleshly works to do, and lawful and necessary business in the world, which God's own commands employ us, our souls in this lantern of the body, must see him through so thick a glass, as shall so far allay our apprehension, as not to distract us, and take us off the works which he enjoineth us. And God and our souls shall be at such a distance, as that the proportionable light of his countenance may conduct us, and not overwhelm us; and his love may be so revealed, as to quicken our desires, and draw us on to a better state, but not so as to make us utterly impatient of this world, and utterly weary of our lives, or to swallow us up, or possess us of our most desired happiness, before we arrive at the state of happiness. While the soul is in the body, it maketh so much use of the body, (the brains and spirits) in all its operations, that our wise and merciful Creator and Governor, doth respect the body as well as the soul, in his ordering, disposing, and representing, of the objects of those operations. So that when I consider, that certainly all men would be distracted, if their apprehensions of God were any whit answerable to the greatness of his majesty and glory, (the brain being not able to bear such high operations of the soul, nor the greatness of the passions which would necessarily follow,) it much reconcileth my wondering mind to the wise and gracious providence of God, even in setting innocent nature itself at such a distance from his glory, (allowing us the presence of such grace, as is necessary to bring us up to glory),—though it reconcile me not to that doleful distance which is

introduced by sin, and which is furthered by Satan, the world, and the flesh, and which our Redeemer, by his Spirit and intercession, must heal.

And it further reconcileth me to this disposure and will of the blessed God, and this necessary natural distance and darkness of our mind, when I consider, that if God, and heaven, and hell, were as near and open to our apprehensions, as the things are which we see and feel, this life would not be what God intended it to be, a life of trial and preparation to another, a work, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare; what trial would there be of any man's faith, or love, or obedience, or constancy, or self-denial? If we saw God stand by, or apprehended him as if we saw him (in degree) it would be no more praiseworthy, or rewardable, for a man to abhor all temptations to worldliness, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, cruelty, &c. than it is for a man to be kept from sleeping, that is pierced with thorns, or for a man to forbear to drink a cup of melted gold, which he knoweth will burn out his bowels, or to forbear to burn his flesh in fire. It were no great commendation to his chastity, that would forbear his filthiness, if he saw or had the fullest apprehensions of God, when he will forbear it in the presence of a mortal man. It were no great commendation to the intemperate and voluptuous, to have no mind of sensual delights, if they had but such a knowledge of God as were equal to sight. It were no thanks to the persecutor to forbear his cruelty against the servants of the Lord, if he "saw Christ coming with his glorious angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel; and

to be admired in his saints, and glorified in them that now believe." I deny not but this happily necessitated holiness is best in itself, and therefore will be our state in heaven; but what is there of trial in it? or how can it be suitable to the state of man, that must have good and evil set before him, and life and death left to his choice; and that must conquer if he will be crowned, and approve his fidelity to his Creator against competitors, and must live a rewardable life before he have the reward?

But though, in this life, we may neither hope for, nor desire, such overwhelming, sensible apprehensions of God, as the rest of our faculties cannot answer, nor our bodies bear; yet that our apprehensions of him should be so base, and small, and dull, and unconstant, as to be borne down by the noise of worldly business, or by the presence of any creature, or by the tempting baits of sensuality, this is the more odious, by how much God is more great and glorious than the creature, and even because the use of the creature itself is but to reveal the glory of the Lord. To have such slight and stupid thoughts of him, as will not carry us on in uprightness of obedience, nor keep us in his fear, nor draw out our hearts in sincere desires to please him, and enjoy him, and as will not raise us to a contempt of the pleasures, and profits, and honours, of this world, this is to be despisers of the Lord, and to live as in a sleep, and to be dead to God, and alive only to the world and flesh. It is no unjust dishonour, or injury, to the creature, to be accounted as nothing in comparison of God, that it may be able to do nothing against him and his interest: but to make such

a nothing of the most glorious God, by our contemptuous forgetfulness or neglect, as that our apprehensions of him cannot prevail against the sordid pleasures of the flesh, and against the richest baits of sin, and all the wrath or allurements of man, this is but to make a god of dust and dung, and nothing, and, in heart and practice, to make God worse than dust and dung. And it is a wonder that man's understanding can become so sottish, as thus to wink the sun itself into a constant darkness, and to take God as nothing, or as no God, who is so abundantly revealed to them, in astonishing transcendent greatness and excellency, by all the creatures in the world; and with whom we have continually so much to do. O sinful man! into how great a depth of ignorance, stupidity, and misery, art thou fallen!

But because we may see by the lives of the ungodly, that they little think that they have so much to do with God, though I have spoken of this to the godly in the other part of this treatise, I shall, somewhat more particularly, acquaint those that have most need to be informed of it, what business it is that they have with God.

CHAP. IV.

The Necessity of our Walking with God.

1. It is not a business that may be done, or left undone, like your business with men; but it is such as must be done, or you are undone for ever. No-

thing is absolutely necessary but this; nothing in all the world doth so much concern you. You may at far cheaper rates forbear to eat, or drink, or clothe yourselves, or live, than forbear the despatch of this necessary work.

2. Your business with God, and for God, in the world, is that for which you have all your powers and endowments; it is that which you were born into the world for, and that which you have understanding and free-will for, and that which you have your thoughts, and memories, and affections for, and that which you have eyes, and ears, and tongues, and your corporeal parts and abilities for; and that which you have your time for; and your preservation, protection and provisions. It is that which you have all your teaching for; which Christ himself came into the world for; which the Scriptures are written for; which ministers are sent for; which all order and government in church and state is principally appointed for. In a word, it is that for which you have your lives, and all things, and without which all were as nothing, and will be to you worse than nothing, if they do not further your work with God. You will wish you had never seen them if they befriend you not in this.

3. Your business with God, and for him, is such as you must be continually doing: as is incumbent on you every hour, for you have every hour given you for this end. You may despatch this man to day, and another to-morrow, and have no more to do with them again of a long time. But you have always incessantly important works to do with God. For your common work should be all his work; and all should be done with principal respect to him.

But I shall yet more particularly tell the ungodly what business it is that they have with God, which it seems, by their careless negligent lives, they are not aware of.

1. You must be either saved or damned by him; either glorified with him, or punished by him to everlasting: and it is now that the matter must be determined, which of the two conditions you must be in. You must now obtain your title to heaven, if ever you will come thither. You must now procure deliverance from hell-fire, if ever you will escape it. Now it is that all must be done, upon which the scales must turn for your salvation or damnation: and you know this work is principally to be done between you and God, who alone can save you or destroy you; and yet do you forget him, and live as if you had no business with him, when you have your salvation to obtain from him, and your damnation to prevent! Have you such business as this with any other?

2. You have a strict and righteous judgment to undergo, in order to this salvation or damnation. You must stand before the Holy Majesty, and be judged by the Governor of the world: you must be there accused, and found guilty or not guilty; and judged as fulfillers, or as breakers of the holy covenant of grace. You must be set on the right hand or on the left. You must answer for all the time that you here spent, and for all the means and mercies which you here received, and for that you have done, whether it were good or evil. And it is now in this life that all your preparation must be made, and all that must be done, upon which your justifi-

cation or condemnation will then depend. And it is between God and you that all this business must be done: and yet can you live as negligently towards him, as if you had no business with him?

3. You have a death to die, a change to make, which must be made but once; which will be the entrance upon endless joy or pain: and do you think this needeth not your most timely and diligent preparation? You must struggle with pains, and faint with weakness, and feel death taking down your earthly tabernacle. You must then have a life that is ending to review, and all that you have done laid open to your more impartial judgment; you must then see time as at an end, and the last sand running, and your candle ready to go out; you must then look back upon all that you had from the world, as ending; and upon all that you have done, as that which cannot be undone again, that you may do it better; and you must have a more serious look into eternity, when you are stepping thither, than you can now conceive of. And doth all this need no preparation? It is with God that all that business must be now transacted, that must make your death to be comfortable or safe. If now you will only converse with men, and know no business that you have with God, you shall find at last to your exceeding terror, that you are in his hands, and passing to his bar, and that it is God that then you have to do with, when your business with all the world is at an end. He will then have something to do with you, if you will now find nothing to do with him.

4. In order to all this, you have now your peace to be made with God, and the pardon of all your sins

to be obtained. For wo to you if then you are found under the guilt of any sin. Look back upon your lives, and remember how you have lived in the world, and what you have been doing: how you have spent your time in youth, and in your riper age; and how many sinful thoughts, and words, and deeds, you have been guilty of; how oft you have sinfully pleased your appetites, and gratified your flesh, and yielded to temptations, and abused mercy, and lost your time. How oft you have neglected your duty, and betrayed your souls: how long you have lived in forgetfulness of God and your salvation; minding only the things of the flesh and of the world. How oft you have sinned ignorantly and against knowledge, through carelessness, and through rashness, through negligence, and through presumption, in passion, and upon deliberation; against convictions, purposes, and promises. How oft you have sinned against the precepts of piety to God, and of justice and charity to men. Think how your sins are multiplied and aggravated, more in number than the hours of your lives: aggravated by a world of mercies, by the clearest teachings and the loudest calls, and sharpest reproofs, and seasonable warnings, and by the long and urgent importunities of grace. Think of all these, and then consider whether you have nothing now to do with God, whether it be not a business to be followed with all possible speed and diligence, to procure the pardon of all these sins. You have no such businesses as these to transact with men. You may have business with them which your estates depend upon, or which touch your credit, commodity, or lives; but you have no business

with men (unless in subordination to God) which your salvation doth depend upon. Your eternal happiness is not in their hands: they may kill your bodies (if God permit them), but not your souls. You need not solicit them to pardon your sins against God. It is a small matter how you are judged of by man. You have one that judgeth you, even the Lord. No man can forgive sin, but God only. O then how early, how earnestly should you cry to him for mercy! Pardon must be obtained now or never. There is no justification for that man at the day of judgment, that is not forgiven and justified now. Blessed then is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom it is not imputed by the Lord. And wo to that man that ever he was born, that is then found without the pardon of his sins! Think of this as the case deserves, and then think if you can, that your daily business with God is small.

5. Moreover, you have peace of conscience to obtain: and that dependeth upon your peace with God. Conscience will be your accuser, condemner and tormentor, if you make it not your friend, by making God your friend. Consider what conscience hath to say against you, and how certainly it will speak home, when you would be loath to hear it: and bethink you how to answer all its accusations, and what will be necessary to make it a messenger of peace; and then think your business with God to be but small, if you are able. It is no easy matter to get assurance that God is reconciled to you, and that he hath forgiven all your sins.

6. In order to all this, you must be united to

Jesus Christ, and be made his members, that you may have part in him, and that he may wash you by his blood, and that he may answer for you to his Father! wo to you if he be not your righteousness, and if you have not him to plead your cause, and take upon him your final justification! None else can save you from the wrath of God. And he is the Saviour only of his body. He hath died for you without your own consent, and he hath made a universal conditional grant of pardon and salvation, before you consented to it: but he will not be united to you, nor actually forgive, and justify, and save you, without your own consent: and therefore that the Father may draw you to the Son, and may give you Christ, and life in him, when all your hope dependeth on it, you may see that you have more to do with God, than your senseless hearts have hitherto understood.

7. And that you may have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, you must have sound repentance for all your former life of wickedness, and a lively, effectual faith in Christ: neither sin nor Christ must be made light of. Repentance must tell you to the very heart, that you have done foolishly in sinning, and that it is an evil and a bitter thing that you forsook the Lord, and that his fear was not in you: and thus your wickedness shall correct you and reprove you. And faith must tell you that Christ is more necessary to you than food or life, and that there is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved. And it is not so easy, nor so common a thing to repent and believe, as ignorant presumptuous sinners do imagine. It is a greater

matter to have a truly humbled, contrite heart, and to loathe yourselves for all your sins, and to loathe those sins, and resolvedly give up yourselves to Christ and to his Spirit for a holy life, than heartlessly and hypocritically to say, I am sorry, or, I repent, without any true contrition or renovation. And it is a greater matter to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ as your only hope, to save you both from sin and damnation, than barely through custom, and the benefit of education, to say, I do believe in Christ. I tell you it is so great a work to bring you to sound repentance and faith, that it must be done by the power of God himself. They are the "gift of God;" you must have his Spirit to illuminate you, and show you the odiousness of sin, the intolerableness of the wrath of God, the necessity and sufficiency, the power and willingness of Christ; and to overcome all your prejudice, and save you from false opinions and deceits; and to repulse the temptations of Satan, the world and the flesh, which will all rise up against you. All this must be done to bring you home to Jesus Christ, or else you will have no part in him, his righteousness and grace. And can you think that you have not most important business with God, who must do all this upon you, or else you are undone for ever!

8. Moreover, you must have all the corruptions of your natures healed, and your sins subdued, and your hearts made new by sanctifying grace, and the image of God implanted in you, and your lives made holy and sincerely conformable to the will of God. All this must be done, or you cannot be acceptable to God, nor ever will be saved: though your carnal

interest rise against it; though your old corrupted natures be against it; though your custom, and pleasure, and worldly gain and honour be against it; though all your carnal friends and superiors be against it; though the devil will do all that he can against it, yet all this must be done or you are lost for ever: and all this must be done by the Spirit of God; for it is his work to make you new and holy: and can you think then that the business is not great which you have with God? When you have tried how hard every part of this work is, to be begun and carried on, you will find you have more to do with God than with all the world.

9. Moreover, in order to this it is necessary that you read, and hear, and understand the Gospel, which must be the means of bringing you to God by Christ: this must be the instrument of God, by which he will bring you to repent and believe, and by which he will renew your natures, and imprint his image on you, and bring you to love him, and obey his will. The word of God must be your counsellor, and your delight, and you must set your heart to it, and meditate in it day and night. Knowledge must be the means to reclaim your perverse, misguided wills, and to reform your careless, crooked lives, and to bring you out of the kingdom of darkness, into the state of light and life. And such knowledge cannot be expected without a diligent attending to Christ, the teacher of your souls, and a due consideration of the truth. By the time you have learnt what is needful to be learnt for a true conversion, a sound repentance, a saving faith, and a holy life, you will find that you have far greater business with God than with all the world.

10. Moreover, for the attaining of all this mercy, you have many a prayer to put up to God: you must daily pray for the forgiveness of your sins, and deliverance from temptations, and even for your daily bread, or necessary provisions for the work which you have to do: you must daily pray for the supplies of grace which you want, and for the gradual mortification of the flesh, and for help in all the duties which you must perform; and for strength against all spiritual enemies which will assault you; and preservation from the manifest evils which attend you: and these prayers must be put up with unwearied constancy, fervency and faith. Keep up this course of fervent prayer, and beg for Christ, and grace, and pardon, and salvation in any measure as they deserve, and according to thy own necessity, and then tell me whether thy business with God be small, and to be put off as lightly as it is by the ungodly.

11. Moreover, you are made for the glory of your Creator, and must apply yourselves wholly to glorify him in the world: you must make his service the trade and business of your lives, and not put him off with something by the by. You are good for nothing else but to serve him; as your clothes are made to cover you, and your meat to feed you, and your horse to labour for you; so you are made, and redeemed, and maintained for this, to love and please your great Creator. And can you think that it is but little business that you have with him, when he is the End and Master of your lives, and all you are or have is for him?

12. And for the due performance of his service, you have all his talents to employ. To this end it

is that he hath entrusted you with reason, and health, and strength; with time, and parts, and interest, and wealth, and all his mercies, and all his ordinances and means of grace; and to this end must you use them, or you lose them: and must you give him an account of all at last, whether you have improved them all to your Master's use? And can you look within you, without you, about you, and see how much you are trusted with, and must be accountable to him for, and yet not see how great your business is with God?

13. Moreover, you have all the graces which you shall receive to exercise; and every grace doth carry you to God, and is exercised upon him, or for him. It is God that you must study, and know, and love, and desire, and trust, and hope in, and obey. It is God that you must seek after, and delight in, so far as you enjoy him: it is his absence or displeasure that must be your fear and sorrow: therefore the soul is said to be sanctified when it is renewed, because it is both disposed and devoted unto God. And therefore grace is called holiness, because it all disposeth, and carrieth the soul to God, and useth it upon and for him. And can you think your business with God is small, when you must live upon him, and all the powers of your soul must be addicted to him, and be in serious motion towards him? and when he must be much more to you than the air which you breathe in, or the earth you live upon, or than the sun that gives you light and heat; yea, than the soul is to your bodies?

14. Lastly, You have abundance of temptations and impediments to watch and strive against, which

would hinder you in the doing of all this work, and a corrupt and treacherous heart to watch and keep in order, which will be looking back and shrinking from the service. Lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not more and greater business with God, than with all the creatures in the world.

And if this be so, (as undeniably it is so,) is there any cloak for that man's sin, who is all day taken up with creatures, and thinks of God as seldom and as carelessly as if he had no business with him? And yet, alas, if you take a survey of high and low, of court, and city, and country, you shall find that this is the case of no small number, yea of many that observe it not to be their case; it is the case of the profane that pray in jest, and swear, and curse, and rail in earnest. It is the case of the malignant enemies of holiness, that hate them at the heart that are most acquainted with this converse with God, and count it but hypocrisy, pride or fancy, and would not suffer them to live upon the earth, who are most sincerely conversant in heaven. It is the case of Pharisees and hypocrites, who take up with ceremonious observances, as, 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' and such like traditions of their forefathers, instead of a spiritual, rational service, and a holy, serious walking with the Lord. It is the case of all ambitious men, and covetous worldlings, who make more ado to climb up a little higher than their brethren, and to hold the reins, and have their wills, and be admired and adored in the world, or to get a large estate for themselves and their posterity, than to please their Maker, or to save their souls. It is

the case of every sensual epicure, whose belly is his god, and serveth his fancy, lust and appetite, before the Lord. It is the case of every unsanctified man, that seeketh first the prosperity of his flesh, before the kingdom and righteousness of God, and is most careful and laborious to lay up a treasure on earth, and laboureth more (with greater estimation, resolution, and delight) for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth to everlasting life. All these (who are too great a part of the world, and too great a part of professed Christians) are taken up with creature converse; and yet think to escape the deluge of God's displeasure, because the Enochs and Noahs are so few who walk with God: and they think God will not destroy so many: and thus they think to be saved by their multitude, and to hide themselves in the crowd from God. They will go the wide and common path, and be of the mind that most are of. They will not be convinced till most men are convinced: that is, till wisdom come too late, and cost them dearer than its worth. When all men are convinced that God should have been preferred before the world, and served before their fleshly lusts, (as they will certainly and sadly be,) then they will be convinced with the rest. When all men understand that life was given them to have done the work on which eternal life dependeth, then they will understand it with the rest. When all men shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God, and those that serve him not, then they will discern it with the rest. They will know what their business was in the world, and how much they had to do with

God, when all men know it. But O how much better for them had it been to have known it in time, while knowledge might have done them better service, than to make them feel the greatness of their sin and folly, and the hopes which once they had of happiness, and to help the sting of desperation continually to prick them at the heart. They would not be of so "little a flock" as that to which it was the "good pleasure" of God to "give the kingdom." If you demand a reason of all this, their reason was in their throats and bellies: they had fleshly appetites and lusts, and thereby could relish fleshly pleasures; but spiritual life and appetite they had none, and therefore relished not spiritual things. Had Christ, and holiness, and heaven, been as suitable to their appetites, as the sweetness of their meat, and drink, and lusts, and as suitable to their fantasies as their worldly dignities and greatness were, they would then have made a better choice. They would have walked with God, if drunkenness, and gluttony, and pride, and wantonness, and covetousness, and idleness, had been the way in which they might have walked with him. If these had been godliness, how godly would they have been! How certainly would they have come to heaven if this had been the way! To be idle, and proud, and fleshly, and worldly, is what they love; and to be humble, and holy, and heavenly, and mortified, is what they hate, and cannot away with: and their love and hatred proceed from their corrupt natures: and these are instead of reason to them. Their strong apprehensions of a present suitableness in fleshly pleasures to their appetites, and of a present unsuitableness of a holy life,

keep out all effectual apprehensions of the excellencies of God, and of spiritual heavenly delights, which cross them in the pleasures which they most desire.

But yet (their appetites corrupting their understandings as well as their wills) they will not be mad without some reason, nor reject their Maker and their happiness without some reason, nor neglect that holy work for which they were made, without some reason. Let us hear then what it is.

CHAP. V.

Some Objections Answered.

Object. 1. They say, "It is true that God hath much to do with us, and for us, but it followeth not, that we have so much to do with him, or for him, as you would have us to believe; for he is necessarily good, and necessarily doth good; and therefore will do so, whether we think of him or not. The sun will not give over shining on me, though I never think on it, or never pray to it, or give it thanks. Nor doth God need any service that we can do him, any more than the sun doth; nor is he pleased any more in the praise of men, or in their works."

Ans. 1. It is most certain that God is good, as necessarily as he is God; but it is not true, that he must necessarily do good to you, or other individual persons; nor that he necessarily doth the good he

doth them. As he is not necessitated to make toads and serpents as happy as men, nor men as angels, so he is not necessitated to save the devils or damned souls, (for he will not save them.) And he was under no greater a necessity to save you than them. He was not necessitated to give you a being; he could have passed you by, and caused others to have possessed your room. As it was God's free-will, and not any necessity, that millions more are never born, that were in possibility of it; (for all that is possible doth not come to pass;) so that you, and millions more, were born, was not of necessity but of the same free-will. And as God did not make you of necessity, but of free-will, so he doth not necessarily but freely justify, or sanctify, or save. If he did it by necessity of nature, he would do it to all as well as some; seeing all have a natural capacity of grace, as well as those that receive it. God is able to sanctify and save more, yea all, if it were his will; and it is not for want of power or goodness that he doth not. Millions of beings are possible, which are not future. God doth not all the good which he is able, but communicateth so much to his several creatures as to his wisdom seemeth meet. If the damned would be so presumptuous as to argue, that, because God is able yet to sanctify and save them, therefore he must do it of necessity of nature, it would not be long before they should thus dispute themselves out of their torments. God will not ask leave of sinners to be God; their denying him to be good, (that is to be God) because he complieth not with their conceits and wills, doth but prove them to be fools, and bad themselves.

Indeed, some sciolists, pretending to learning, while they are ignorant of most obvious principles of natural knowledge, have taught poor sinners to cheat their souls with such dreams as these. They have made themselves believe, that goodness in God is nothing else but his benignity, or disposition to do good. As if the creature were the ultimate end, and all God's goodness but a means thereto: and so God were the Alpha or first efficient, and yet the creature the Omega, or "finis ultimus;" and all the goodness in God were to be estimated, and denominated, by its respect to the felicity of man; and so the creature hath the best part of the Deity. Such notions evidently show us, that lapsed man is predominantly selfish, and is become his own idol, and is lost in himself, while he hath lost himself by his loss of God. When we see how powerful his self-interest is, both with his intellect and will: even men of great ingenuity, till sanctification hath restored them to God, and taught them better to know him and themselves, are ready to measure all good or evil by their own interests; when yet common reason would have told them, if they had not perverted it by pride and partial studies, that, short of God, even among the creatures, there are many things to be preferred before themselves, and their own felicity. He is irrationally enslaved by self-love, that cannot see that the happiness of the world, or of his country, or of multitudes, is more to be desired than his happiness alone; and that he ought rather to choose to be annihilated, or to be miserable, (if it were made a matter of his deliberation and choice,) than to have the sun taken out of the firma-

ment, or the world, or his country to be annihilated or miserable. And God is infinitely above the creature.

Object. But they say, "He needeth nothing to make him happy, having no defect of happiness."

Ans. And what of that? Must it needs therefore follow, that he made not all things for himself, but for the creature finally? He is perfectly happy in himself, and his will is himself; this will was fulfilled when the world was not made, (for it was his will that it should not be made till it was made,) and it is fulfilled when it is made, and fulfilled by all that comes to pass. And as the absolute simple goodness and perfection of God's essence is the greatest good, the eternal immutable good, so the fulfilling of his will is the ultimate end of all obedience. He hath expressed himself to take pleasure in his works; and in the holiness, obedience, and happiness, of his chosen; and though pleasure be not the same thing in God, as it is in man, (no more than will or understanding is,) yet it is not nothing which God expresseth by such terms, but something which we have no fitter expression for; this pleasing of the will of God being the end of all, even of our felicity, is better than our felicity itself.

They that will maintain that God, who is naturally and necessarily good, hath no other goodness but his benignity, or aptness to do good to his creatures, must needs also maintain that (God being for the creature, and not the creature for God) the creature is better than God, as being the ultimate end of God himself, and the highest use of all his goodness being but for the felicity of the creature.

As also that God doth all the good that he is able, (for natural necessary agents work " ad ultimum posse;") and that all men shall be saved, and all devils; and every worm and toad be equal to the highest angel, or else that God is not able to do it. And that he did thus make happy all his creatures from eternity, (for natural, necessary agents work always if they be not forcibly hindered;) and that there never was such a thing as pain or misery, in man or brute, or else that God was not able to prevent it. But abundance of such odious consequences must needs follow from the denying of the highest good, which is God himself, and confessing none but his efficient goodness. But some will be offended with me, for being so serious in confuting such an irrational, atheistical conceit, who know not how far it prevaileth with an atheistical generation.

Be it known to you, careless sinners, that though the sun will shine on you whether you think on it or not, or love it, or thank it or not; and the fire will warm you, whether you think on it or not, or love it or not; yet God will not justify or save you, whether you love him or think on him or not. God doth not operate brutishly in your salvation, but governeth you wisely, as rational creatures are to be governed; and, therefore, will give you happiness as a reward; and therefore will not deal alike with those that love him, and that love him not; that seek him, and that seek him not; with the labourers and the loiterers, the faithful and slothful servant. Would you have us believe, that you know better than God himself what pleaseth himself, or on what terms he will give his benefits, and save men's souls?

or do you know his nature better than he knoweth it, that you dare presume to say, because he needeth not our love or duty, therefore they are not pleasing to him! Then what hath God to do in governing the world, if he be pleased and displeased with nothing that men do, or with good and evil actions equally? Though you cannot hurt him, you shall find that he will hurt you, if you disobey him; and though you cannot make him happy by your holiness, you shall find that he will not make you happy without it.

And if he did work as necessarily as the sun doth shine, according to your similitude, yet, 1. Even the shining of the sun doth not illuminate the blind, nor doth it make the seeds of thorns and nettles to bring forth vines or roses, nor the gendering of frogs to bring forth men; but it actuateth all things according to the several natures of their powers. And therefore how can you expect that an unbelieving and unholy soul, should enjoy felicity in God, when in that state they are incapable of it? 2. And if the sun do necessarily illuminate any one, he must necessarily be illuminated; and if it necessarily warm or quicken any thing, it must necessarily be warmed and quickened; else you would assert contradictions. So if God did necessarily save you, and make you happy, you would necessarily be saved and made happy. And that containeth essentially your holiness, your loving, desiring, and seeking after God; to be saved or happy without enjoying God by love, or to love him and not desire him, seek him, or obey him, are as great contradictions, as to be illuminated without light, or quick-

ened without life. What way soever it be that God conveyeth his sanctifying Spirit, I am sure that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his;" and that "without holiness none shall see God;" and that if you will have the kingdom of God, you must seek it first, preferring it before all earthly things. And then, if all the question that remaineth undecided be, whether God do you wrong or not in damning you, or whether God be good, because he will not save you when he can, I shall leave you to him to receive satisfaction, who will easily silence and confound your impudence, and justify his works and laws. Prepare your accusations against him, if you will needs insist upon them, and try whether he or you shall prevail; but remember that thou art a worm, and he is God, and that he will be the only Judge when all is done; and ignorance and impiety, that prate against him to their own confusion, in the day of his patience, shall not then usurp the throne.

Object. 2. "But how can God be fit for mortals to converse with, when they see him not, and are infinitely below him?"

Answ. I hope you will not say that you have nothing to do at home, with your own souls: and yet you never saw your souls. And it is the souls, the reason, and the will of men that you daily converse with here in the world, more than their bodies, and yet you never saw their souls, their reason or their wills. If you have no higher light to discern by than your eyesight, you are not men but beasts. If you are men, you have reason; and if you are Christians, you have faith, by which you know

things that you never saw. You have more dependance on the things that are unseen than on those which you see, and have much more to do with them.

And though God be infinitely above us; yet he condescendeth to communicate to us according to our capacities: as the sun is far from us, and yet doth not disdain to enlighten, and warm, and quicken a worm or fly here below. If any be yet so much an atheist as to think that religious converse with God is but a fancy, let him well answer me these few questions.

Quest. 1. Doth not the continued being and well-being of the creatures, tell us that there is a God on whom (for being and well-being) they depend, and from whom they are, and have whatsoever they are, and whatsoever they have? And therefore that passively all the creatures have more respect to him by far, than to one another?

Quest. 2. Seeing God communicateth to every creature according to their several capacities, is it not meet then that he deal with man as man, even as a creature rational, capable to know, and love, and obey his great Creator, and to be happy in the knowledge, love, and fruition of him? That man hath such natural faculties, and capacities, is not to be denied by a man that knoweth what it is to be a man: and that God hath not given him these in vain, will be easily believed by any that indeed believe that he is God.

Quest. 3. Is there any thing else that is finally worthy of the highest actions of our souls? or that is fully adequate to them, and fit to be our happiness? If not, then we are left either to certain infelicity,

contrary to the tendency of our natures, or else we must seek our felicity in God.

Quest. 4. Is there any thing more certain than that by the title of creation, our Maker hath a full and absolute right to all that he hath made; and consequently to all our love and obedience, our time, and powers? For whom should they all be used but for him from whom we have them?

Quest. 5. Can any thing be more sure, than that God is the righteous Governor of the world? And that he governeth man as a rational creature, by laws and judgment? And can we live under his absolute sovereignty, and under his many righteous laws, and under his promises of salvation to the justified, and under his threatenings of damnation to the unjustified, and yet not have more to do with God than with all the world? If indeed you think that God doth not love and reward the holy and obedient, and punish the ungodly and disobedient, then either you take him not to be the Governor of the world, or (which is worse) you take him to be an unrighteous Governor: and then you must by the same reason say, that magistrates and parents should do so too, and love and reward the obedient and disobedient alike: but if any man's disobedience were exercised to your hurt, by slandering, or beating, or robbing you, I dare say you would not then commend so indifferent and unjust a Governor.

Quest. 6. If it be not needless for man to labour for food and raiment, and necessary provision for his body, how can it be needless for him to labour for the happiness of his soul? If God will not give us our daily bread while we never think of it, or seek

it, why should we expect that he will give us heaven though we never think on it, value it, or seek it?

Quest. 7. Is it not a contradiction to be happy in the fruition of God, and yet not to mind him, desire him, or seek him? How is it that the soul can reach its object, but by estimation, desire, and seeking after it: and how should it enjoy it but by loving it, and taking pleasure in it?

Quest. 8. While you seem but to wrangle against the duty of believers, do you not plead against the comfort and happiness of believers? For surely the employment of the soul on God (and for him) is the health and pleasure of the soul; and to call away the soul from such employment, is to imprison it in the dungeon of this world, and to forbid us to smell to the sweetest flowers, and confine us to a sink or dunghill, and to forbid us to taste of the food of angels, or of men, and to offer us vinegar and gall, or turn us over to feed with swine. He that pleadeth that there is no such thing as real holiness and communion with God, doth plead in effect that there is no true felicity or delight for any of the sons of men: and how welcome should ungodly atheists be unto mankind, that would for ever exclude them all from happiness, and make them believe they are all made to be remedilessly miserable?

And here take notice of the madness of the unthankful world, that hateth and persecuteth the preachers of the gospel, that bring them the glad tidings of pardon, and hope, and life eternal, of solid happiness, and durable delight; and yet they are not offended at these atheists and ungodly cavillers, that would take them off from all that is truly good and

pleasant, and make them believe that nature hath made them capable of no higher things than beasts, and hath enthralled them in remediless infelicity.

Quest. 9. Do you not see, by experience, that there are a people in the world whose hearts are upon God, and the life to come, and that make it their chiefest care and business to seek him and to serve him? How then can you say that there is no such thing, or that we are not capable of it, when it is the case of so many before your eyes? If you say that it is but their fancy or self-deceit: I answer, that really their hearts are set upon God, and the everlasting world, and that it is their chiefest care and business to attain it; this is a thing that they feel, and you may see in the bent and labour of their lives; and therefore you cannot call that a fancy, of which you have so full experience: but whether the motives that have invited them, and engaged them to such a choice and course, be fancies and deceits or not, let God be judge, and let the awakened consciences of worldlings themselves be judge, when they have seen the end, and tried whether it be earth or heaven that is the shadow, and whether it be God or their unbelieving hearts that was deceived.

Quest. 10. Have you any hopes of living with God for ever, or not? If you have not, no wonder if you live as beasts, when you have no higher expectations than beasts. When we are so blind as to give up all our hopes, we will also give up all our care and holy diligence, and think we have nothing to do with heaven. But if you have any such hopes, can you think that any thing is fitter for the chiefest of your thoughts and cares, than the God and king-

dom, which you hope for ever to enjoy? Or is there any thing that can be more suitable, or should be more delightful to your thoughts, than to employ them about your highest hopes, upon your endless happiness and joy? and should not that be now the most noble and pleasant employment for your minds, which is nearest to that which you hope to be exercised in for ever? Undoubtedly he that hath true and serious thoughts of heaven, will most highly value that life on earth which is most like to the life in heaven: and he that hateth, or is most averse to that which is nearest to the work of heaven, does boast in vain of his hopes of heaven.

By this time you may see (if you love not to be blind) that man's chiefest business in the world is with his God, and that our thoughts, and all our powers, are made to be employed upon him, or for him; and that this is no such needless work as atheists make themselves believe.

Remember that it is the description of the desperately wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts." And if yet you understand it not, I will a little further show you the evil of such atheistical, unhallowed thoughts.

1. There is nothing but darkness in all thy thoughts, if God be not in them. Thou knowest nothing, if thou knowest not him; and thou usest not thy knowledge, if thou use it not on him. To know the creature as without God, is to know nothing: no more than to know all the letters in the book, and not to know their signification or sense. All things in the world are but insignificant ciphers, and of no other sense or use, if you separate them

from God, who is their sense and end. If you leave out God in all your studies, you do but dream and dote, and not understand what you seem to understand. Though you were taken for the most learned men in the world, and were able to discourse of all the sciences, and your thoughts had no lower employment daily than the most sublime speculations which the nature of all the creatures doth afford, it is all but folly and impertinent dotage, if it reach not unto God.

2. Yea, your thoughts are erroneous and false, which is more than barely ignorant, if God be not in them. You have false thoughts of the world, of your houses and lands, and friends and pleasures, and whatsoever is the daily employment of your minds. You take them to be something, when they are nothing; you are covetous of the empty purse, and know not that you cast away the treasure. You are thirsty after the empty cup, when you wilfully cast away the drink. You hungrily seek to feed upon a painted feast. You murder the creature by separating it from God, who is its life, and then you are enamoured on the carcase; and spend your days and thoughts in its cold embracements. Your thoughts are but vagabonds, straggling abroad the world, and following impertinencies, if God be not in them. You are like men that walk up and down in their sleep, or like those that have lost themselves in the dark, who weary themselves in going they know not whither, and have no end nor certain way.

3. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are all in vain. They are like the drone that gathereth no honey. They fly abroad and return home

empty. They bring home no matter of honour to God, or profit or comfort to yourselves. They are employed to no more purpose than in your dreams: only they are more capable of sin: like the distracted thoughts of one that doteth in a fever, they are all but nonsense, whatever you employ them on, while you leave out God, who is the sense of all.

4. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are nothing but confusion. There can be no just unity in them, because they forsake him who is the only centre, and are scattered abroad upon incoherent creatures. There can be no true unity but in God. The further we go from him, the further we run into divisions and confusions. There can be no just method in them, because he is left out that is the beginning and the end. They are not like a well-ordered army, where every one is moved by the will of one commander, and all know their colours and their ranks, and unanimously agree to do their work: but like a swarm of flies, that buzz about they know not whither, nor why, nor for what. There is no true government in your thoughts, if God be not in them; they are masterless and vagrants, and have no true order, if they be not ordered by him and to him; if he be not their first and last.

5. If God be not in all your thoughts, there is no life in them: they are but like the motion of a bubble, or a feather in the air: they are impotent as to the resisting of any evil, and as to the doing of any saving good: they have no strength in them, because they are laid out upon objects that have no strength: they have no quickening, renewing, re-

forming, encouraging, resolving, confirming power in them, because there is no such power in the things on which they are employed: whereas the thoughts of God and everlasting life can do wonders upon the soul: they can raise up men above this world, and teach them to despise the worldling's idol, and look upon all the pleasures of the flesh as upon a swine's delight in wallowing in the mire. They can renew the soul, and cast out the most powerful beloved sin, and bring all our powers into the obedience of God, and that with pleasure and delight: they can employ us with the angels, in a heavenly conversation, and show us the glory of the world above, and advance us above the life of the greatest princes upon earth: but the thoughts of earthly, fleshly things have power indeed to delude men, and mislead them, and hurry them about in a giddy motion; but no power to support us, or subdue concupiscence, or heal our folly, or save us from temptations, or reduce us from our errors, or help us to be useful in the world, or to attain felicity at last. There is no life, nor power, nor efficacy in our thoughts, if God be not in them.

6. There is no stability or fixedness in our thoughts if God be not in them. They are like a boat upon the ocean, tossed up and down with winds and waves: the mutable uncertain creatures can yield no rest or settlement to your minds. You are troubled about many things; and the more you think on them, and have to do with them, the more are you troubled: but you forget the one thing necessary, and fly from the eternal rock, on which you must build, if ever you will be established. While

the creature is in your thought instead of God, you will be one day deluded with its unwholesome pleasure, and the next day feel it gripe you at the heart: one day it will seem your happiness, and the next you will wish you had never known it: that which seemeth the only comfort of your lives this year, may the next year make you weary of your lives. One day you are impatiently desiring and seeking it, as if you could not live without it: and the next day, or ere long, you are impatiently desiring to be rid of it. You are now taking in your pleasant morsels, and drinking down your delicious draughts, and jovially sporting it with your inconsiderate companions; but how quickly will you be repenting of all this, and complaining of your folly, and vexing yourselves, that you took not warning, and made not a wiser choice in time? The creature was never made to be our end, or rest, or happiness: and therefore you are but like a man in a wilderness or maze, that may go and go, but knoweth not whither, and findeth no end, till you come home to God, who only is your proper end, and make him the Lord, and life, and pleasure of your thoughts.

7. As there is no present fixedness in your thoughts, so the business and pleasure of them will be of very short continuance, if God be not the chief in all. And who would choose to employ his thoughts on such things as he is sure they must soon forget, and never more have any business with to all eternity? You shall think of those houses, and lands, and friends, and pleasures, but a little while, unless it be with repenting, tormenting thoughts, in the place of misery: you will have no delight to

think of any thing, which is now most precious to your flesh, when once the flesh itself decays, and is no more capable of delight. " His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

Call in your thoughts then from these transitory things, that have no consistency or continuance, and turn them unto him with whom they may find everlasting employment and delight. Remember not the enticing baits of sensuality and pride, but " Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

8. Thy thoughts are but sordid, dishonourable and low, if God be not the chiefest in them. They reach no higher than the habitation of beasts; nor do they attain to any sweeter employment than to meditate on the felicity of a brute. Thou choosest with the fly to feed on dung, when thou mightest have free access to God himself, and mightest be entertained in the court of heaven, and welcomed thither by the holy angels. Thou wallowest in the mire with the swine, or diggest thyself a house in the earth, as worms and moles do, when thy thoughts might be soaring up to God, and might be taken up with high and holy, and everlasting things. What if your thoughts were employed for preferment, wealth, and honour in the world? Alas! what silly things are these, in comparison of what your souls are capable of! You will say so yourselves when you see how they will end, and fail your expectations. Imprison not your minds in this in-

fernal cell, when the superior regions are open to their access: confine them not to this narrow vessel of the body, whose tossings and dangers on these boisterous seas will make them restless, and disquiet them with tumultuous passions, when they may safely land in Paradise, and there converse with Christ. God made you men, and if you reject not his grace, will make you saints: make not yourselves like beasts. God gave you souls that can step in a moment from earth to heaven, and there foretaste the endless joys: do not you stick then fast in clay, and fetter them with worldly cares, or intoxicate them with fleshly pleasures, nor employ them in the worse than childish toys of ambitious, sensual, worldly men. Your thoughts have manna, angels' food, provided them by God: if you will loathe this and refuse it, and choose with the serpent to feed on the dust, God shall be judge, and your consciences one day shall be more faithful witnesses, whether you have dealt like wise men or like fools; like friends or enemies to yourselves; and whether you have not chosen baseness, and denied yourselves the advancement which was offered you.

9. If God be not the chiefest in your thoughts, they are no better than dishonest and unjust. You are guilty of denying him his own. He made not your minds for lust and pleasure, but for himself. You expect that your cattle, your goods, your servants, be employed for yourselves, because they are your own. But God may call your minds his own by a much fuller title: for you hold all but derivatively and dependently from him. What will you call it but injustice and dishonesty, if your wife, or chil-

dren, or servants, or goods, be more at the use and service of others, than of you? If any can show a better title to your thoughts than God doth, let him have them; but if not, deny him not his own. O straggle not so much from home; for you will be no where else so well as there. Desire not to follow strangers, you know not whither, nor for what; you have a Master of your own, that will be better to you than all the strangers in the world. Bow not down to creatures, that are but images of the true and solid good: commit not idolatry or adultery with them in your thoughts: remember still that God stands by: bethink you how he will take it at your hands; and how it will be judged of at last, when he pleads his right, his kindness, and solicitations of you; and you have so little to say for any pretence of right or merit in the creature. Why are not men ashamed of the greatest dishonesty against God, when all that have any humility left them, do take adultery, theft, and other dishonesty against creatures, for a shame? The time will come when God and his interest shall be better understood, when this dishonesty against him will be matter of the most confounding shame that ever did or could befal men. Prevent this by the juster exercise of your thoughts, and keeping them pure and chaste to God.

10. If God be not in your thoughts (and the chiefest in them) there will be no matter in them of solid comfort or content. Trouble and deceit will be all their work: when they have fled about the earth, and taken a taste of every flower, they will come loaden home with nothing better than vanity and vexation. Such thoughts may excite the

laughter of a fool, and cause that mirth that is called madness; but they will never conduce to settled peace, and durable content: and therefore they are always repented of themselves, and are troublesome to our review, as being the shame of the sinner, which he would fain be cleared of, or disown. Though you may approach the creature with passionate fondness and the most delightful promises and hopes, be sure of it, you will come off at last with grief and disappointment, if not with the loathing of that which you chose for your delight. Your thoughts are in a wilderness among thorns and briars, when God is not in them as their guide and end: they are lost and torn among the creatures; but rest and satisfaction they will find none. It may be at the present it is pleasanter to you to think of recreation, or business, or worldly wealth, than to think of God; but the pleasure of these thoughts is as delusory and short-lived, as are the things themselves on which you think. How long will you think with pleasure on such fading transitory things? And the pleasure cannot be greater at the present, which reacheth but the flesh and fantasy, and which the possessed knoweth will be but short. Nay, you will shortly find by sad experience, that of all the creatures under heaven, there will be none so bitter to your thoughts, as those in which you now find greatest carnal sweetness. O how bitter will the thought of idolized honour, and abused wealth and greatness be, to a dying or a damned Dives! The thoughts of that alehouse or playhouse where thou hadst thy greatest pleasure, will trouble thee more than the thoughts

of all the houses in the town besides! The thoughts of that one woman with whom thou didst commit thy pleasant sin, will wound and vex thee more than the thoughts of all the women in the town besides! The thoughts of that beloved sport which thou couldst not be weaned from, will be more troublesome to thee than the thoughts of a thousand other things in which thou hadst no inordinate delight! For the end of sinful mirth is sorrow. When Solomon had tried to please himself to the full, in mirth, in buildings, vineyards, woods, waters, in servants, and possessions, silver, and gold, and cattle, and singers, and instruments of music of all sorts, in greatness, and all that the eye or appetite or heart desired; he findeth when he awaked from this pleasant dream, that he had all this while been taken up with vanity and vexation, in so much that he saith on the review, "Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit: yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun." You may toil out and tire yourselves among these briars, in this barren wilderness; but if ever you would feel any solid ground of quietness and rest, it must be by coming off from vanity, and seeking your felicity in God, and living sincerely for him and upon him, as the worlding doth upon the world. His pardoning mercy must begin your peace, forgiving you your former thoughts; and his healing, quickening mercy must increase it, by teaching you better to employ your thoughts, and drawing up your hearts to himself; and his glorifying mercy must perfect it, by giving

you the full intuition and fruition of himself in heaven, and employing you in his perfect love and praise, not leaving any room for creatures, nor suffering a thought to be employed on vanity for ever.

CHAP. VI.

Inquiry into our Walking with God.

By this time I hope you may see reason to call yourselves to a strict account, what converse you have been taken up with in the world, and upon what you have exercised your thoughts. Surely you must needs be conscious, that the thoughts which have been denied God, have brought you home but little satisfaction, and have not answered the ends of your creation, redemption, or preservation! and that they are now much fitter matter for your penitential tears, than your comfort, in the review! I do not think you dare own, and stand to those thoughts which have been spent for fleshly pleasures, or in unnecessary worldly cares, or that were wasted in impertinent vagaries upon any thing, or nothing, when you should have been seeking God! I do not think you have now any great pleasure, in the review of those thoughts, which once were taken up with pleasure, when your most pleasant thoughts should have been of God. Dare you approve of your rejecting your Creator, and the great concerns of your soul, out of your

thoughts, and wasting them upon things unprofitable and vain? Did not God and heaven deserve more of your serious thoughts than any thing else that ever they were employed on? Have you laid them out on any thing that more concerned you? or on any thing more excellent, more honourable, more durable, or that could claim precedency upon any just account? Did you not shut heaven itself out of your thoughts, when you shut out God? And is it not just that God and heaven should shut out you? If heaven be not the principal matter of your thoughts, it is plain that you do not principally love it: and if so, judge you whether those that love it not are fit to be made possessors of it.

O poor distracted senseless world! Is not God great enough to command and take up your chiefest thoughts? Is not heaven enough to find them work, and afford them satisfaction and delight? And yet is the dung and dotage of the world enough? Is your honour, and wealth, and fleshly delights, and sports enough? God will shortly make you know, whether this were wise and equal dealing! Is God so low, so little, so undeserving, to be so oft and easily forgotten, and so hardly, and so slightly remembered? I tell you, ere long he will make you think of him to your sorrow, whether you will or no, if grace do not now set open your hearts, and procure him better entertainment.

But perhaps you will think that you walk with God because you think of him sometimes ineffectually, and as by the by. But is he esteemed as your God, if he have not the command, and if he have not the precedency of his creatures! Can you dream that in-

deed you walk with God, when your hearts were never grieved for offending him, nor never much solicitous how to be reconciled to him; nor much inquisitive whether your state or way be pleasing or displeasing to him! When all the business of an unspeakable importance, which you have to do with God, before you pass to judgment, is forgotten and undone, as if you knew not of any such work that you had to do! When you make no serious preparation for death, when you call not upon God in secret, or in your families, unless with a little heartless lip labour; and when you love not the spirituality of his worship, but only delude your souls with the mockage of hypocritical outside compliment. Do you walk with God while you are plotting for preferment, and gaping after worldly greatness; while you are gratifying all the desires of your flesh, and making provision for the future satisfaction of its lusts? Are you walking with God when you are hating him in his holiness, his justice, his word and ways, and hating all that seriously love and seek him; when you are doing your worst to despatch the work of your damnation, and put your salvation past all hope, and draw as many to hell with you as you can? If this be a walking with God, you may take farther comfort that you shall also dwell with God, according to the sense of such a walk; you shall dwell with him as a devouring fire, and as just, whom you thus walked with in the contempt of his mercies, and the provocation of his justice.

I tell you, if you walk with God indeed, his authority would rule you, his greatness would much

take up your minds, and leave less room for little things; you would trust his promises, and fear his threatenings, and be awed by his presence, and the idols of your hearts would fall before him; he would overpower your lusts, and call you off from your ambitious and covetous designs, and obscure all the creature's glory. Believing, serious, effectual thoughts of God, are very much different from the common, doubtful, dreaming, ineffectual thoughts of the ungodly world.

Object. "But, (perhaps some will say,) this seemeth to be the work of preachers, and not of every Christian, to be always meditating of God: poor people must think of other matters: they have their business to do, and their families to provide for: and ignorant people are weak-headed, and are not able either to manage or endure a contemplative life. So much thinking of God will make them melancholy and mad, as experience tells us it hath done by many: and therefore this is no exercise for them."

To this I answer, 1. Every Christian hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, and a Christ to believe in and obey, and an endless happiness to secure and enjoy, as well as preachers. Pastors must study to instruct their flock, and to save themselves, and those that hear them. The people must study to understand and receive the mercy offered them, and to make their calling and election sure. It is not said of pastors only, but of every blessed man, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night." 2. And the due meditation of the soul upon God, is so far from taking you off from your necessary business

in the world, that it is the only way to your orderly and successful management of it. 3. And it is not a distracting thoughtfulness that I persuade you to, or which is included in a Christian's walk with God; but it is a directing, quickening, exalting, comforting course of meditation. Many a hundred have grown melancholy and mad with careful, discontented thoughts of the world; it doth not follow therefore that no man must think of the world at all, for fear of being mad or melancholy; but only that they should think of it more regularly, and correct the error of their thoughts and passions. So is it about God and heavenly things. Our thoughts are to be well ordered, and the error of them cured, and not the use of them forborne. Atheism and impiety, and forgetting God, are unhappy means to prevent melancholy. There are wiser means for avoiding madness, than by renouncing all our reason, and living by sense, like the beasts that perish, and forgetting that we have an everlasting life to live.

But yet because I am sensible that some do here mistake on the other hand, and I would not lead you into any extreme, I shall fully remove the scruple contained in this objection, by showing you in the following propositions, in what sense, and how far your thoughts must be taken up with God (supposing what was said in the beginning, where I described to you the duty of walking with God.)

Prop. 1. When we tell you that your thoughts must be on God, it is not a course of idle musing, or mere thinking, that we call you to, but it is a necessary practical thinking of that which you have to do, and of him that you must love, obey and en-

joy. You will not forget your parents, or husband, or wife, or friend; and yet you will not spend your time in sitting still and thinking of them, with a musing unprofitable thoughtfulness: but you will have such thoughts of them, and so many as are necessary to the ends, even to the love and service which you owe them, and to the delight that your hearts should have in the fruition of them. You cannot love, or obey, or take pleasure in those that you will not think of: you will follow your trades, or your master's service but unhappily, if you will not think on them. Thinking is not the work that we must take up with: it is but a subservient, instrumental duty, to promote some greater, higher duty: therefore we must think of God, that we may love him, and do his service, and trust him, and fear, and hope in him, and make him our delight. And all this is it that we call you to, when we are persuading you to think on God.

2. A hypocrite, or a wicked enemy of God, may think of him speculatively, and perhaps be more frequent in such thoughts than many practical believers. A learned man may study about God, as he doth about other matters, and names, and notions; and propositions and decisions concerning God, may be a principal part of his learning. A preacher may study about God, and the matters of God, as a physician or a lawyer does about matters of their own profession, either for the pleasure which knowledge, as knowledge, brings to human nature, or for the credit of being esteemed wise and learned, or because their gain and maintenance comes in this way. They that fill many volumes with controversies con-

cerning God, and fill the church with contentions and troubles by them, and their own heart with malice and uncharitableness against those that are not of their opinions, have many and many a thought of God, which yet will do nothing to the saving of their souls, no more than they do to the sanctifying of them. And such learned men may think more orthodoxly and methodically concerning God, than many an honest, serious Christian, who yet thinks of him more effectually and savingly: even as they can discourse more orderly and copiously of God, when yet they have no saving knowledge of him.

3. All men must not bestow so much time in meditation as some must do: it is the calling of ministers to study so as to furnish their minds with all those truths concerning God, which are needful to the edification of the church; and so to meditate on these things as to give themselves wholly to them. It is both the work of their common and their special calling. The study necessary to Christians as such, belongeth as well to others as to them: but other men have another special or particular calling, which also they must think of, so far as the nature and ends of their daily labours require. It is a hurtful error to imagine that men must either lay by their callings to meditate on God, or that they must do them negligently, or to be taken up in the midst of their employments with such studies of God as ministers are, that are separated to that work.

4. No man is bound to be continually taken up with actual, distinct thoughts of God: for in duty we have many other things to think on, which must have their time; and as we have callings to follow,

and must eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, so we must manage them with prudence. "A good man will guide his affairs with discretion." It is both necessary as a duty, and necessary as a means to the preservation of our very faculties, that both body and mind have their times of employment about our lawful business in the world. The understandings of many cannot bear it, to be always employed on the greatest and most serious things: like lutestrings, they will break if they be raised too high, and be not let down and relaxed when the lesson is played. To think of nothing else but God, is to break the law of God, and to confound the mind, and to disable it to think aright of God, or any thing. As he that bids us pray continually, did not mean that we should do nothing else, or that actual prayer should have no interruptions, but that habitual desires should on all meet occasions be actuated and expressed; so he that would be chief in all their thoughts, did never mean that we should have no thoughts of any thing else, or that our serious meditation on him should be continual without interruption; but that the final intending of God, and our dependance on him, should be so constant as to be the spring or mover of the rest of the thoughts and actions of our lives.

5. An habitual, intending God as our end, and depending on his support, and subjection to his government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual most observed thoughts of the soul, be fewer in number about God, than about the means that lead to him, and the occurrences in our way. The soul of man

is very active and comprehensive, and can think of several things at once; and when it is once clear and resolved in any case, it can act according to that knowledge and resolution, without any present sensible thought; nay, while its actual, most observed thoughts are upon something else. A musician, that hath an habitual skill, can keep time and tune while he is thinking of some other matter. A weaver can cast his shuttle right, and work truly, while he is thinking or talking of other things. A man can eat and drink with discretion, while he talks of other things. Some men can dictate to two or three scribes at once, upon divers subjects. A traveller can keep on his way, though he seldom think distinctly of his journey's end, but be thinking or discoursing most of the way upon other matters: for before he undertook his journey he thought both of the end and way, and resolved then which way to go, and that he would go through all both fair and foul, and not turn back till he saw the place. And this habitual understanding and resolution may be secretly and unobservedly active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back, though at the same time the traveller's most sensible thoughts and his discourse may be upon something else. When a man is once resolved of his end, and hath laid his design, he is past deliberating of that, and therefore hath less use of his thoughts about it; but is readier to lay them out upon the means, which may be still uncertain, or may require his frequent deliberation. We have usually more thoughts and speeches by the way, about our company, or our horses, or inns, or other accommodations, or the fairness or foul-

ness of the way, or other such occurrences, than we have about the place we are going to: and yet this secret intention of our end will bring us thither. So when a soul hath cast up his accounts, and hath renounced a worldly, sensual felicity, and hath fixed his hopes and resolution upon heaven, and is resolved to cast himself upon Christ, and take God for his only portion, this secret habitual resolution will do much to keep him constant in the way, though his thoughts and talk be frequently on other things: yea, when we are thinking of the creature, and feel no actual thoughts of God, it is yet God more than the creature that we think of: for we did beforehand look on the creature as God's work, representing him to the world, and as his talents, which we must employ for him, and as every creature is related to him; and this estimation of the creature is still habitually (and in some secret less-perceived act) most prevalent in the soul. Though I am not always sensibly thinking of the king, when I use his coin, or obey his laws, &c. yet it is only as his coin still that I use it, and as his laws that I obey them. Weak habits cannot do their work without great carefulness of thoughts; but perfect habits will act a man with little thoughtfulness, as coming near the natural way of operation. And indeed the imperfection of our habitual godliness doth make our serious thoughts, and vigilancy, and industry to be the more necessary to us.

6. There are some thoughts of God that are necessary to the very being of a holy state; as that God be so much in our thoughts, as to be preferred before all things else, and principally beloved and obeyed; and to the end of our lives, and the bias of

our wills. And there are some thoughts of God that are necessary only to the acting and increase of grace.

7. So great is the weakness of our habits, so many and great are the temptations to be overcome, so many difficulties are in our way, and the occasions so various for the exercise of each grace, that it behoveth a Christian to exercise as much thoughtfulness about his end and work, as hath any tendency to promote his work, and to attain his end; but such a thoughtfulness as hindereth us in our work, by stopping, or distracting, or diverting us, is no way pleasing unto God. So excellent is our end, that we can never encourage and delight the mind too much in the forethoughts of it. So sluggish are our hearts, and so loose and unconstant are our apprehensions and resolutions, that we have need to be most frequently quickening them, and lifting at them, and renewing our desires, and suppressing the contrary desires, by the serious thoughts of God and immortality. Our thoughts are the bellows that must kindle the flames of love, desire, hope and zeal. Our thoughts are the spur that must put on a sluggish, tired heart. And so far as they conduce to any such works and ends as these, they are desirable and good. But what master loveth to see his servant sit down and think when he should be at work? or to use his thoughts only to grieve and vex himself for his faults, but not to mend them? to sit down lamenting that he is so bad and unprofitable a servant, when he should be up and doing his master's business as well as he is able? Such thoughts as hinder us from duty, or

discourage, or unfit us for it, are real sins, however they may go under a better name.

8. The godly themselves are very much wanting in the holiness of their thoughts, and the liveliness of their affections. Sense leadeth away the thoughts too easily after these present sensible things; while faith being infirm, the thoughts of God and heaven are much disadvantaged by their invisibility. Many a gracious soul crieth out, O that I could think as easily, and as affectionately, and as unweariedly about the Lord, and the life to come, as I can do about my friends, my health, my habitation, my business, and other concerns of this life! But, alas! such thoughts of God and heaven have far more enemies and resistance than the thoughts of earthly matters have.

9. It is not distracting, vexatious thoughts of God, that the Holy Scriptures call us to; but it is to such thoughts as tend to the healing, and peace, and felicity of the soul; and therefore it is not a melancholy, but a joyful life. If God be better than the world, it must needs be better to think of him. If he be more beloved than any friend, the thoughts of him should be sweeter to us. If he be the everlasting hope and happiness of the soul, it should be a foretaste of happiness to find him nearest to our hearts. The nature and use of holy thoughts, and of all religion, is but to exalt and sanctify and delight the soul, and bring it up to everlasting rest. And is this the way to melancholy or madness? Or is it not more likely to make men melancholy, to think of nothing but a vain, deceitful and vexatious world, that hath much to disquiet us, but no-

thing to satisfy us, and can give the soul no hopes of any durable delight?

10. Yet as God is not equally related to all, so is he not the same to all men's thoughts. If a wicked enemy of God and godliness be forced and frightened into some thoughts of God, you cannot expect that they should be as sweet and comfortable thoughts, as those of his most obedient children are. While a man is under the guilt and power of his reigning sin, and under the wrath and curse of God, unpardoned, unjustified, a child of the devil, it is not this man's duty to think of God, as if he were fully reconciled to him, and took pleasure in him as in his own. Nor is it any wonder if such a man think of God with fear, and think of his sin with grief and shame. Nor is it any wonder the justified themselves do think of God with fear and grief, when they have provoked him by some sinful and unkind behaviour, or are cast into doubts of their sincerity and interest in Christ, and when he hides his face or assaulteth them with his terrors. To doubt whether a man shall live for ever in heaven or hell, may rationally trouble the thoughts of the wisest man in the world; and it were but sottishness not to be troubled at it: David himself could say, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Will the Lord cast off for ever?"

Yet all the sorrowful thoughts of God, which are

the duty either of the godly or the wicked, are but necessary preparatives of their joy. It is not to melancholy, distraction or despair, that God calleth any, even the worst: but it is that the wicked would "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; that he would forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Despair is sin; and the thoughts that tend to it are sinful thoughts, even in the wicked. If worldly crosses, or the sense of danger to the soul had cast any into melancholy, or overwhelmed them with fears, you can name nothing in the world that in reason should be so powerful a remedy to recover them, as the thoughts of God, his goodness, and mercy, and readiness to receive and pardon those that turn unto him, his covenant, and promises, and grace, through Christ, and the everlasting happiness which all may have that will accept and seek it in the time of grace, and prefer it before the deceitful transitory pleasures of the world. If the thoughts of God, and of the heavenly, everlasting joys will not comfort the soul, and cure a sad, despairing mind, I know not what can rationally do it. Though yet it is true that a presumptuous sinner must needs be in a trembling state, till he find himself at peace with God: and mistaken Christians, that are cast into causeless doubts and fears, by the malice of Satan, are unlikely to walk comfortably with God, till they are resolved and recovered from their mistakes and fears.

CHAP. VII.

We must Walk with God in our Thoughts.

Object. But it may be the objector will be ready to think, that "If it be indeed our duty to walk with God, yet thoughts are no considerable part of it. What more uncertain or mutable than our thoughts? It is deeds and not thoughts that God regardeth. To do no harm to any, but to do good to all, this is indeed to walk with God. You set a man upon a troublesome and impossible work, while you set him upon so strict a guard, and so much exercise of his thoughts. What cares the Almighty for my thoughts?"

Answ. 1. If God knows better than you, and be to be believed, then thoughts are not so inconsiderable as you suppose. Doth he not say, that "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord?" It is the work of the Gospel by its power, to "pull down strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts, is part of his necessary conversion. It was the description of the deplorable state of the old world, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved

him at his heart." Judge by this, whether thoughts be so little regarded by God as you imagine. David saith of himself, "I hate vain thoughts." Solomon saith, "The thoughts of the righteous are right." Paul saith that "Charity thinketh not evil."

2. Thoughts are the issue of a rational soul. And if its operations be contemptible, its essence is contemptible: if its essence be noble, its operations are considerable. If the soul be more excellent than the body, its operations must be more excellent. To neglect our thoughts, and not employ them upon God, and for God, is to vilify our noblest faculties, and deny God, who is a Spirit, that spiritual service which he requireth.

3. Our thoughts are commonly our most cordial, voluntary acts, and show the temper and inclination of the heart: and therefore are regardable to God that searcheth the heart, and calleth first for the service of the heart.

4. Our thoughts are radical and instrumental acts: such as they are, such are the actions of our lives. Christ telleth us that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile the man."

5. Our thoughts are under a law, as well as words and deeds. "The thought of foolishness is sin." Christ extendeth the law even to the thoughts and desires of the heart. And under the law it is said, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," &c. namely, of unmercifulness towards thy brother.

6. Thoughts can reach much higher than sense, and may be employed upon the most excellent and invisible objects; and therefore are fit instruments to elevate the soul that would converse with God. Though God be infinitely above us, our thoughts may be exercised on him. Our persons never were in heaven, and yet our conversation must be in heaven. And how is that but by our thoughts? Though we see not Christ, yet by the exercise of believing thoughts on him, we love him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Though God be invisible, yet our "meditations of him may be sweet, and we may delight in the Lord." Say not that all this is but fantastical and delusory, as long as thoughts of things unseen are fitter to actuate and elevate the love, desires and delights of the soul, and to move and guide us in a regular and holy life, than the sense of lesser present good. The thoughts are not vain or delusory unless the object of them be false and vain, and delusory. Where the object is great, and sure, and excellent, the thoughts of such things are excellent operations of the soul. If the thoughts of vain-glory, wealth and pleasure, can delight the ambitious, covetous and sensual, no wonder if the thoughts of God and life eternal afford us solid, high delights.

7. The thoughts are not so liable to be counterfeit and hypocritical as are the words and outward deeds: and therefore they show more what the man is, and what is in his heart. For as Solomon saith, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

8. Our thoughts may exercise the highest graces of God in man; and also show those graces, as be-

ing their effects. How is our faith, and love, and desire, and trust, and joy, and hope, to be exercised but by our thoughts? If grace were not necessary and excellent, it would not be wrought by the Spirit of God, and called the Divine Nature, and the image of God. And if grace be excellent, the use and exercise of it is excellent: and therefore our thoughts by which it is exercised must needs have their excellency too.

9. Our thoughts must be the instruments of our improving all holy truth in Scripture, and all the mercies which we receive, and all the afflictions which we undergo. What good will reading a chapter in the Bible do to any one that never thinketh on it? "Our delight in the law of God," must engage us to "meditate in it day and night." What good shall he get by hearing a sermon that exerciseth not his thoughts for the receiving and digesting it? Our considering what is said, is the way in which we may expect that God should give us "understanding in all things." What the better will he be for any of the merciful providences of God, who never bethinks him whence they come, or what is the use and end that they are given for? What good will he get by any afflictions, that never bethinks him, who it is that chastiseth him, and for what, and how he must get them removed, and sanctified to his good? A man is but like one of the pillars in the church, or like the corpse which he treadeth on, or at best but like the dog that followeth him thither for company, if he use not his thoughts about the work which he hath in hand, and cannot say, "We have thought of thy loving-

kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." He that biddeth you hear, doth also bid you "Take heed how you hear." And you are commanded to "lay up the word in your heart and soul." "And to set your hearts to all the words which are testified among you: for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."

10. Our thoughts are so considerable a part of God's service, that they are oft put for the whole. "A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Our believing and loving God, and trusting in him, and desiring him and his grace, are the principal parts of his service, which are exercised immediately by our thoughts: and in praise and prayer it is this inward part that is the soul and life of all. He is a foolish hypocrite that thinks "to be heard for his much speaking."

And on the contrary, the thoughts are named as the sum of all iniquity. "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity." "I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within you!" "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

11. A man's thoughts are the appointed orderly way for the conversion of a sinner, and the preventing of his sin and misery. David saith, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The prodigal "came to himself," and returned to his father, by the success of his own

consideration. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways," is a voice that every sinner should hear. "It is he that considereth, and doth not according to his father's sins, that shall not die." Therefore it is God's desire, "O that they were wise and understood this, and that they would consider their latter end." It is either men's inconsiderateness, or the error of their thoughts, that is the cause of all their wickedness. "My people doth not consider." Paul "verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus." Many "deceive themselves by thinking themselves something when they are nothing." "They think it strange that we run not with them to excess of riot;" and therefore "they speak evil of us." Disobedient formalists "consider not that they do evil," when they think that they are offering acceptable sacrifices to God. The very murder of God's holy ones hath proceeded from these erroneous thoughts; "they that kill you shall think they do God service." All the ambition, and covetousness, and injustice and cruelty following thereupon, which troubleth the world, and ruineth men's souls, is from their erroneous thoughts, overvaluing these deceitful things. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations." The presumptuous and impenitent are surprised by destruction, for want of thinking of it to prevent it: "In such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh."

12. Lastly, the thoughts are the most constant actions of a man, and therefore most of the man is in them. We are not always reading, or hearing,

or praying, or working: but we are always thinking. And therefore it doth especially concern us to see that this constant breath of the soul be sweet, and that this constant stream be pure and run in the right channel. Well therefore did David make this his request; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I say therefore to those that insist on this irrational objection, that these very thoughts of theirs, concerning the inconsiderableness of thoughts, are so foolish and ungodly, that when they understand the evil even of these, they will know that thoughts were more to be regarded. "If therefore thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth."

And though after all this, I still confess that it is so exceeding hard a matter to keep the thoughts in holy exercise and order, that even the best do daily and hourly sin, in the omissions, the disorder or vanity of their thoughts; yet for all that, we must needs conclude that the inclination and design of our thoughts must be principally for God, and that the thoughts are principal instruments of the soul, in acting it in his service, and moving it towards him, and in all this holy work of our walking with God: and therefore to imagine that thoughts are inconsiderable and of little use, is to unman us, and unchristianize us. The labour of the mind is necessary for the attaining the felicity of the mind; as the labour of the body is necessary for the things that belong to the body. As bodily idleness bring-

eth to beggary, when the diligent hand makes rich; so the idleness of the soul doth impoverish the soul, when the laborious Christian liveth plentifully and comfortably through the blessing of God upon his industry and labour. You cannot expect that God should appear to you in a bodily shape, that you may have immediate converse with him in the body. The corporal eating of him in transubstantiated bread, supposed common to men, and mice, or dogs, we leave to Papists, who have made themselves a singular new religion, in despite of the common sense and reason of mankind, as well as of the Scriptures and the judgment of the church. It is in the Spirit that thou must converse with God who is a Spirit. The mind seeth him by faith, who is invisible to the bodily eyes. Nay, if you will have a true and saving knowledge of God, you must not liken him to any thing that is visible, nor have any corporal conceivings of him. Earthly things may be the glass in which we may behold him, while we are here in the flesh; but our conceivings of him must be spiritual, and minds that are immersed in flesh and earth are unmeet to hold communion with him. The natural man knoweth him not, and the "carnal mind is enmity to him, and they that are in the flesh cannot please him." It is the pure, abstracted, elevated soul, that understandeth by experience what it is to walk with God.

CHAP. VIII.

The Benefits of Walking with God.

HAVING, in the foregoing uses, reproved the atheism and contempt of God, which ungodly men are continually guilty of, and endeavoured to convince them of the necessity and desirableness of walking with God, and in particular of improving our thoughts for holy converse with him, and answered the objections of the impious and atheists; I shall next endeavour to cure the remnants of this disease in those that are sincerely holy, who live too strangely to God their Father in the world. In the performance of this, I shall first show you what are the benefits of this holy life, which should make it appear desirable and delightful. 2. I shall show you why believers should addict themselves to it as doubly obliged, and that their neglect of it is a sin attended with special aggravations. This is the remainder of my task.

1. To walk with God in a holy and heavenly conversation, is the employment most suitable to human nature, not to its corrupt disposition, nor to the carnal interest and appetite; but to nature as nature, to man as man. It is the very work that he was made for: the faculties and frame of the soul and body were composed for it by the wise Creator: they are restored for it by the gracious Redeemer. Though in corrupted nature, where sensuality is predominant, there is an estrangedness from God,

and an enmity and hatred of him, so that the wicked are more averse to all serious holy converse with him (in prayer, contemplation, and a heavenly life) than they are to a worldly sinful life; yet all this is but the disease of nature, corrupting its appetite, and turning it against that proper food, which is most suitable to its sound desires, and necessary to its health and happiness. Though sinful habits are become as it were a second nature to the ungodly, so depraving their judgments and desires, that they verily think the business and pleasures of the flesh are most suitable to them; yet these are as contrary to nature as nature, that is, to the primitive tendencies of all our faculties, and the proper use to which they were fitted by our Creator, and to that true felicity which is the end of all our parts and powers, even as madness is contrary to the rational nature, though it were hereditary.

1. What can be more agreeable to the nature of man, than to be rational and wise, and to live in the purest exercise of reason? And certainly there is nothing more rational than that we should live to God, and gladly accept of all that communion with him which our natures on earth are capable of. Nothing can be more reasonable than for the reasonable soul to be entirely addicted to him that did create it, that doth preserve it, and by whom it doth subsist and act. Nothing is more reasonable than that the absolute Lord of nature be honoured and served wholly by his own. Nothing is more reasonable than that the reasonable creature do live in the truest dependance upon, and subordination to, the highest reason; and that derived, imperfect, de-

fectible wisdom, be subservient to, and guided by, the primitive, perfect, indefectible wisdom. It is most reasonable that the children depend upon the Father, and the foolish be ruled by the most wise, and that the subjects be governed by the universal King; and that they honour him and obey him; and that the indigent apply themselves to him that is all-sufficient, and is most able and ready to supply their wants; and that the impotent rest upon him that is omnipotent.

2. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the reasonable nature should intend its end, and seek after its true and chief felicity: and that it should love good as good, and therefore prefer the chiefest good before that which is transitory and insufficient. Reason commandeth the reasonable creature to avoid its own delusion and destruction, and to rest upon him that can everlastingly support us, and not upon the creature that will deceive us and undo us: and to prefer the highest and noblest converse before that which is inferior, unprofitable, and base, and that we rejoice more in the highest, purest, and most durable delights, than in those that are sordid, and of short continuance. And who knoweth not that God is the chiefest good, and true felicity of man, the everlasting rock, the durable delight, and to be preferred before his creatures? And who might not find, that would use his reason, that all things below are vanity and vexation?

3. Nothing can be more rational and agreeable to man's nature, than that the superior faculties should govern the inferior, that the brutish part be subject to the rational: and that the ends and objects

of this higher faculty be preferred before the objects of the lower; that the objects of sense be made subservient to the objects of reason. If this be not natural and rational, then it is natural to man to be no man, but a beast, and reasonable to be unreasonable. Now it is evident that a holy living to God is but the improvement of true reason, and its employment for and upon its noblest object, and its ultimate end; and that a sensual life is the exercise of the inferior, brutish faculties, in predominancy above and before the rational: and therefore to question whether God or the creature should be first sought, and loved, and principally desired, and delighted in, and served, is but to question whether we should live like men or like beasts, and whether dogs or wise men be the fitter companions for us? And whether the rider or the horse should have the rule? Whether the rational or sensitive powers be superior and proper to the nature of a man?

Object. " But there is a middle state of life betwixt the sensual and the divine or holy life, which sober philosophers did live, and this is the most natural life, and most properly so called."

Answ. I deny this. There is no middle state of life, if you denominate the several states of life, from the several ends, or the several powers. I grant that the very sensitive powers in man, especially the imagination, are much advanced, by the conjunction of reason, above that of a brute: and I grant that the delights of the phantasy may be preferred before the immediate pleasure of the senses: and I grant that some little distant knowledge of God, and things divine, and hopes of attaining them, may affect an

unsanctified man with an answerable pleasure. But all this is nothing to prove that there is a third sort of end, or of powers, and so a third or middle state of life, specifically distinct from the sensitive and the holy life. Besides, the vegetative man hath no other life or faculties, than the sensitive and the rational: and therefore one of these must be in predominancy or rule. And therefore he can have no middle sort or end; and therefore no middle state of life, that can be said to be agreeable to his nature. Those that seek and take up their chief felicity in riches and plenty, and provisions for the flesh, though not in the present pleasing of the sense, do live but the life of sensuality. A fox or dog takes pleasure when he hath eaten his belly full, to hide and lay up the rest: and so doth the bee to fill the hive, and make provision for the winter. The proud that delight in honour and applause, and making others subject to their lusts, do live but the life of sensuality: a dog, a horse, and other brutes, have something of the same. They that are grave through melancholy, or because they can reach no great matter in the world, and because their old or duller spirits are not much pleased with juvenile delights, and so live retiredly, and seek no higher pleasure or felicity, but only sit down with the weeping or the laughing philosopher, lamenting or deriding the vanity of the world, do yet live no other than a sensual life: as an old dog that hath no pleasure in hunting or playfulness, as he had when he was a whelp. Only he is less deluded, and less vain than other sensualists that find more pleasure in their course.

All the doubt is concerning those that place their felicity in knowledge, and those that delight in moral virtues, or that delight in studying of God, though they are no Christians.

Answ. The point is weighty, and hath oft unhappily fallen into injudicious hands. I shall endeavour to resolve it as truly, clearly, and as impartially as I can.

1. It is a great error against the nature of man to say, that knowledge, as such, is fit to be any man's chief and ultimate end. It may be that act which is next the enjoying act of the will, which indeed is next the end, objectively considered: but it is not that act which we call *ultimate ultimus.* And this is plain, 1. Because the object of the understanding, which is truth, is not formally the nearest object or matter of full felicity or delight: it is goodness that is the nearest object. 2. And therefore the office of the intellect is but introductive and subservient to the office of the will, to apprehend the verity of good, and present it to the will to be prosecuted or embraced, or delighted in. There are many truths that are ungrateful and vexatious, and which men would wish to be no truths. And there is a knowledge which is troublesome, useless, undesirable and tormenting, which even a wise man would fain avoid, if he knew how. Morality is but preparatively in the intellect: and therefore intellectual acts, as such, are not morally good, or evil, but only participatively, as subject to the will. And therefore knowledge, as such, being not a moral good, can be no other than such a natural good as is *bonum alicui*, only so far as it tendeth to some welfare or hap-

piness, or pleasure of the possessor or some other: and this welfare or pleasure is either that which is suited to the sensitive powers, or to the rational (which is to be found in the love of God alone.)

2. I add therefore, that even those men that seem to take up their felicity in common knowledge, indeed do but make their knowledge subservient to something else which they take for their felicity. For knowledge of evil may torment them. It is only to know something which they take to be good, that is their delight. And it is the complacency or love of that good at the heart, which sets them on work, and causeth the delight of knowing. If you will say that common knowledge, as knowledge, doth immediately delight, yet will it be found but such a pleasing of the phantasy, as an ape hath in spying marvels, which, if it have no end that is higher, is still but a sensitive delight; but if it be referred to a higher delight (in God) it doth participate of the nature of it. Delight in general is the common end of men and brutes: but in specie they are distinguished as sensual or rational.

3. If you suppose a philosopher to be delighted in studying mathematics, or any of the works of God, either he hath herein an end, or no end beyond the knowledge of the creature: either he terminateth his desires and delights in the creature, or else useth it as a means to raise him to the Creator. If he study and delight in the creature ultimately, this is indeed the act of a rational creature, and an act of reason, as to the faculty it proceeds from (and so is a rational contrivance for sensual end and pleasures:) but it is but the error of reason, and is no more

agreeable to the rational nature, than the deceit of the senses is to the sensitive. Nor is it finally to be numbered with the operations felicitating human nature, any more than an erroneous dream of pleasure, or than that man is to be numbered with the lovers of learning, who taketh pleasure in the binding, leaves, or letters of the book, while he understandeth nothing of the sense. But if this philosopher seek to know the Creator in and by the creatures, and take delight in the Maker's power, wisdom and goodness, which appear in them, then this is truly a rational delight, in itself considered, and beseeming a man. And if he reach so far in it, as to make God his highest desire and delight, overpowering the desires and delights of sensuality, he shall be happy, as being led by the Son unto the Father: but if he make but some little approaches towards it, and drown all such desires in the sensual desires and delights, he is then but an unhappy sensualist, and living brutishly in the tenor of his life, though in some acts in part he operate rationally as a man.

The like I may say of them that are said to place their delight in moral virtues. Indeed, nothing is properly a moral good (or virtue) but that which is exercised upon God as our end, or upon the creature as a means to this end. To study and know mere notions of God, or what is to be held and said of him in discourse, is not to study to know God, any more than to love the language and phrase of holy writing, is to love God. To study God as one that is less regardable and desirable than our sensual delights, is but to blaspheme him. To

study, seek, and serve him, as one that can promote or hinder our sensual felicity, is but to abuse him as a means to your sensuality. And for the virtues of temperance, justice, or charity, they are but analogically, and *secundum quid*, to be found in any ungodly person. Materially they may have them in an eminent degree: but not as they are informed by the end which moralizeth them. Jezebel's fast was not formally a virtue, but an odious way of hypocrisy to oppress the innocent. He that doth works of justice and mercy, to evil ends only, (as for applause, or to deceive, &c.) and not from the true principles of justice and mercy, doth not thereby exercise moral virtue, but hypocrisy, and other vice. He that doth works of justice and mercy, out of mere natural compassion to others, and desire of their good, without respect to God, as obliging, or rewarding, or desiring it, doth perform such a natural good work, as a lamb, or a gentle beast, doth to his fellows, which hath not the true form of moral virtue, but the matter only. He that, in such works, hath some little by-respect to God, but more to his carnal interest among men, doth that which, by the by, participateth of moral good, or is such *secundum quid*, but not *simpliciter*, being to be denominated from the part predominant. He that doth works of justice or charity, principally to please God, and in true obedience to his will, and a desire to be conformed thereto, doth that which is formally a moral good, and holy, though there may be abhorred mixtures of worse respects.

So that there are but two states of life here: one, of those that walk after the flesh, and the other, of

those that walk after the Spirit. However, the flesh hath several materials and ways of pleasure; and even the rational actings that have a carnal end, are carnal finally and morally, though they are acts of reason; for they are but the errors of reason, and defectiveness of true rationality; and being but the acts of erroneous reason, as captivated by the flesh, and subservient to the carnal interest, they are themselves to be denominated carnal; and so even the reasonable soul, as biassed by sensuality, and captivated thereto, is included in the name of "flesh," in the Scripture.

How much moral good is in that course of piety or obedience to God, which proceedeth only from the fear of God's judgments, without any love to him, I shall not now discuss, because I have too far digressed already.

All that I have last said, is to show you the reasonableness of living unto God, as being indeed the proper and just employment of the superior faculties of the soul, and the government of the lower faculties. For if any other, called moralists, do seem to subject the sensual life to the rational, either they do but seem to do so—the sensual interest being indeed predominant, and their rational operations subjected thereto—or at the best, it is but some poor and erroneous employment of the rational faculties which they exercise, or some weak approaches towards that high and holy life, which is indeed the life which the rational nature was created for, and which is the right improvement of it.

4. Moreover, nothing is more beseeming the nature of man, than to aspire after the highest and

noblest improvement of itself; and to live the most excellent life that it is capable of. For every nature tendeth to its own perfection. But it is most evident, that to walk with God in holiness, is a thing that human nature is capable of; and that is the highest life that we are capable of on earth: and therefore it is the life most suitable to our natures.

5. And what can be more rational and beseeming a created nature, than to live to those ends, which our Creator intended in the very forming of our natures? It is his ends that are principally to be served. But the very composure of our faculties plainly proves, that his end was that we should be fitted for his service; he gave us no powers or capacity in vain: and therefore to serve him and walk with him, is most suitable to our natures.

Object. "That is natural which is first, and born with us: but our enmity to holiness is first, and not our holiness."

Answ. It may be called natural indeed, because it is first, and born with us: and in that respect we confess that sin, and not holiness, is natural to us. But holiness is called natural to us, in a higher respect, because it was the primitive, natural constitution of man, and was before sin, and is the perfection or health of nature, and the right employment and improvement of it, and tends to its happiness. An hereditary leprosy may be called natural, as it is first, and before health in that person: but health and soundness is natural, as being the well-being of nature, when the leprosy is unnatural, as being but its disease, and tending to its destruction.

Object. "But nature in its first constitution was

not holy, but innocent only, and it was by a superadded gift of grace that it became holy, as some schoolmen think, and as others think, Adam had no holiness till his restoration."

Answ. These are popish improved fancies, and contrary to nature and the word of God. 1. They are no where written, nor have any evidence in nature, and therefore are the groundless dreams of men.

2. The work of our recovery to God is called in Scripture a redemption, renovation, restoration, which imply that nature was once in that holy estate before the fall. And it is expressly said, that the "new man" which we "put on, is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." And after God's image Adam was created.

3. If it belong to the soundness and integrity of nature to be holy, (that is, disposed and addicted to live to God) then it is rash and foolish for men, out of their own imagination, to feign that God first made nature defective, and then mended it by superadded grace. But if it belong not to the soundness and integrity of human nature to be holy, then why did God give him grace to make him so? Nay, then it would follow, that when God sanctified Adam, or any since, he made him specifically another thing, another creature, of another nature, and did not only cure the diseases of his nature.

4. It is yet apparent in the very nature of man's faculties, that their very usefulness and tendency, is to live to God, and to enjoy him: and that God should make a nature apt for such a use, and give it no disposedness to its proper use, is an unnatural

conceit. We see to this day that it is but an unreasonable abuse of reason, when it is not used holily for God; and it is a very disease of nature to be otherwise disposed. Therefore primitive nature had such a holy inclination.

5. The contrary opinion tendeth to infidelity, and to brutify human nature. For if no man can believe that he must be holy, and live to God, and enjoy him hereafter in heaven, but he that also believeth that primitive nature was never disposed or qualified for such a life; and that God must first make a man another creature in specie, of another nature (and consequently not a man) this is not only improbable, but so contrary to Scripture and reason, that few considerate persons would believe it. As if we must believe that God would turn brutes into men. God healeth, elevateth, and perfecteth nature, but doth not specifically change it, at least in this life.

Object. "But let it be granted that he giveth no man specifically another nature, yet he may give him such higher gifts, as may be like another nature to him so far."

Answ. No doubt he may and doth give him such gifts as actuate and perfect nature: but some disposition to our ultimate end is essential to our nature; and therefore to assign man another ultimate end, and to give a disposition to it, of which he had no seed, or part, or principle before, is to make him another creature. I confess that in lapsed man, the holy disposition is so far dead, as that the change maketh a man a new creature in a moral sense (as he is a new man that changeth his mind and man-

ners:) but still nature hath its aptitude, as rational, to be employed for its Maker; so that he is not a new creature in a natural sense.

An actual or habitual willingness to his holy employment, a promptitude to it, and a due understanding of it, is the new creature, morally so called, which is given in our sanctification: but the natural aptitude that is in our faculties as rational, to this holy life, is essential to us as men, or as rational; even to have the *potentiam naturalem* which must yet have further help or moral life to actuate it. And Adam had both these: the one he retained, or else he had not continued a man; the other he lost, or else he had not had need of renovation.

6. If Adam's nature had not been disposed to God, as to his end and sovereign, then the law of nature (to adhere to God, and obey and serve him) was not written in his heart: and then it would not have been his duty to adhere to God, and to obey and serve him; which is so false, that even in lapsed, unrenewed nature, there is left so much aptitude hereto, as will prove him to be still under the obligations of this law of nature, even actually to adhere to God, and to obey him, which a dead man, a madman, or an infant, is not (immediately.)

By all this you see, that though the blindness and disease of reason is contrary to faith and holiness, yet reason itself is so much for it, as that faith itself is but the act of elevated well informed reason; and supernatural revelation is but the means to inform our reason, about things which have not a natural evidence, discernible by us. And sanctification (actively taken) is but the healing of our reason

and rational appetite: and holiness is but the health or soundness of them. The error of reason must be renounced by believers; but not the use of reason: the sufficiency of reason and natural light, without supernatural light and help, we must all deny: but to set reason, as reason, in opposition to faith or holiness, or divine revelation, is as gross a piece of foolery, as to set the visive faculty in opposition to the light of the sun, or to its objects. It is the unreasonableness of sinners that is to be cured by illuminating grace. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Their reason is wounded, depraved, and corrupted about the matters of God; they have reason to serve the flesh, but not to master it. God doth renew men by giving them wisdom, and bringing them to a sound mind: as logic helpeth reason in discourse and arguing, so theology informeth reason about the matters of God and our salvation: and the Spirit of God doth make his doctrine and revelation effectual. Make nature sound, and reason clear, and then we will consent that all men be persuaded to live according to their nature and their reason. But if a bedlam will rave and tear himself and others, and say, This is according to my nature or my reason; it is fitter that chains and whips do cure that nature and reason, than that he be allowed to live according to his madness. If a drunkard or whoremonger will say, My nature and reason incline me to please my appetite and lust, it is fit that the swinish nature be corrected, and the beast which rideth and ruleth the man, be taken down; and when indeed his nature is the nature of man, and fitted to the use and ends it

was made for, then let him live according to it and spare not. If a malicious man will abuse or kill his neighbour, and say, This is according to my nature, let that nature be used as the nature of wolves and foxes, and other noxious creatures are. But let human nature be cured of its blindness, carnality, and corruption, and then it will need no exernal testimony to convince it, that no employment is so natural and suitable to man, as to walk with God, in love and confidence, and reverent worship, and cheerful obedience to his will. A worldly, fleshly, sensual life, will then appear to be below the rational nature of a man, as it is below us to go to grass with horses, or to live as mere companions of brutes. It will then appear to be as natural for us to love and live to our Creator and Redeemer, and to walk with God, as for a child to love his parents, and to live with them and serve them. When I say that this is natural, I mean not that it is necessary by natural necessity, or that grace doth operate *per modum naturæ*, as their rational motion is so called. There is a brutish or inanimate nature, and there is a rational, voluntary nature. Grace worketh not according to the way of inanimate nature, in free agents. I may well say, that whatever is rational, is natural to a rational creature as such, so far as he discerneth it. Yea, and habits, though they effect not necessarily, but freely in a rational nature, yet they incline necessarily, *et per modum naturæ*. They contain in their being a natural aptitude and propensity to action.

Object. " But thus you confound nature and

grace, natural and supernatural operations, while you make grace natural."

Answ. No such matter: Though walking with God be called natural, as it is most agreeable to nature so far as it is sound, and is the felicity and meetest employment of the rational nature as such: yet, 1. Diseased nature doth abhor it, as a diseased stomach the pleasantest and most wholesome food, (as I said before.) 2. And this disease of nature cannot be cured without divine, supernatural grace. So that as to the efficient cause, our holiness is supernatural. But it is unsound doctrine of those that affirm that Adam in his pure, natural state of innocence, had no natural holiness, or aptitude and promptitude to walk with God in order to everlasting happiness; but say that all this was either wanting to him, and was a state specifically distinct, which he fell short of by his sin, or that it was given him by superadded grace, and was not in his entire nature.

And yet we deny not but as to degrees. Adam's nature was to grow up to more perfection: and that his natural holiness contained not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude to every duty which might afterwards be required of him; but this was to be obtained in the exercise of that holiness which he had: even as a vine or other fruit-tree, though it be natural to it to bear its proper fruit, yet hath it not an immediate sufficient aptitude hereto, whilst it is but appearing out of the seed, before it be grown up to just maturity. Or as it is natural to a man to discourse and reason; but yet his nature in in-

fancy, or untaught and unexercised, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude hereunto. Or as grace inclineth a renewed soul to every holy truth and duty; and yet such a soul in its infancy of grace, hath not a sufficient, immediate aptitude or promptitude to the receiving of every holy truth, or the doing of every holy duty; but must grow up to it by degrees. But the addition of these degrees, is no specifical alteration of the nature of man, or of that grace which was before received.

Having been so long upon this first consideration, (that walking with God is most agreeable to human nature,) I shall be more brief in the rest that follow.

II. To walk with God and live to him, is incomparably the highest and noblest life. To converse with men only, is to converse with worms: whether they be princes or poor men, they differ but as the bigger animals from the lesser. If they be wise and good, their converse may be profitable and delightful, because they have a beam of excellency from the face of God: (and O how unspeakable is the distance between his wisdom and goodness, and theirs!) But if they be foolish, ungodly, and dishonest, how loathsome is their conversation! What stinking breath is in their profane and filthy language! in their lives and slanders of the just! in their sottish jeers and scorns of those that walk with God! which expose at once their folly and misery to the pity of all that are truly understanding. When they are gravely speaking evil of the things which they understand not, or with a fleering confidence deriding merrily the holy commands and ways of God, they are much more lamentably expressing

their infatuation, than any that are kept in chains in bedlam: though indeed, with the most, they escape the reputation which they deserve, because they are attended with persons of their own proportion of wisdom, that always reverence a silken coat, and judge them wise that wear gold lace, and have the greatest satisfaction of their wills and lusts, and are able to do most mischief in the world: and because good men have learned to honour the worst of their superiors, and not to call them as they are. But God is bold to call them as they are, and give them in his word, such names and characters by which they might come to know themselves. And is it not a higher, nobler life to walk with God, than to converse in bedlam, or with intoxicated sensualists, that live in a constant deliration?

Yea, worse than so: ungodly men are "children of the devil," so called by Jesus Christ himself, because they have much of the nature of the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do: yea, they "are taken captive by him at his will." They are the "servants of sin," and do the drudgery that so vile a master sets them on. Certainly as the spirits of the just are so like to angels, that Christ saith, we shall be as they, and equal to them; so the wicked are nearer kin to devils, than they themselves will easily believe. They are as like him as children to their father. He is a liar, and so are they. He is a hater of God, and godliness, and godly men, and so are they. He is a murderer, and would fain devour the holy seed; and such are they. He envieth the progress of the Gospel, and the prosperity of the church, and the increase of holiness, and so

do they. He hath a special malice against the most powerful and successful preachers of the word of God, and against the most zealous and eminent saints; and so have they. He cares not by what lies and fictions he disgraceth them, nor how cruelly he useth them; no more do they, (or some of them at least). He cherisheth licentiousness, sensuality and impiety; and so do they. If they do seem better in their adversity and restraint, yet try them but with prosperity and power, and you shall see quickly how like they are to devils. And shall we delight more to converse with brutes and incarnate devils, than with God? Is it not a more high and excellent conversation to walk with God, and live to him, than to be companions of such degenerate men, that have almost forfeited the reputation of humanity? Alas! they are companions so deluded and ignorant, and yet so wilful; so miserable, and yet so confident and secure, that they are, to a believing eye, the most lamentable sight that the whole world can show us out of hell. And how sad a life must it then needs be, to converse with such, were it not for the hope that we have of furthering their recovery and salvation.

But to walk with God is a word so high, that I should have feared the guilt of arrogance in using it, if I had not found it in the holy Scriptures. It is a word that importeth so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresseth such high and holy actions, that the naming of it striketh my heart with reverence, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standeth is holy ground." Methinks he that

shall say to me, Come see a man that walks with God, doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel, or glorified soul! It is a far more reverend object in mine eye, than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their fleshly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together, to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumph. O happy man, that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him! What blessed sights doth he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasant melody doth he daily hear, unless it be in his swoons or sickness! What delectable food doth he daily taste! He seeth by faith the God, the glory, which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest intuition! He seeth that in a glass and darkly, which they behold with open face! He seeth the glorious Majesty of his Creator, the eternal King, the Cause of causes, the Composer, Upholder, Preserver, and Governor of all the worlds! He beholdeth the wonderful methods of his providence: and what he cannot reach to see, he admireth, and waiteth for the time when that also shall be open to his view! He seeth by faith the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotedness to God; their ardent love; their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceedeth that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias when they appeared on the holy mount, and talked with Christ! They hear by faith the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise,

the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of him that redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests to God: herein he hath sometimes a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures, which, though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the clusters of grapes which were brought from Canaan into the wilderness, yet are they more excellent than all the delights of sinners. And in the beholding of this celestial glory, some beams do penetrate his breast, and so irradiate his longing soul, that he is changed thereby into the same image, from glory to glory; the Spirit of Glory and of God do rest upon him. And O what an excellent holy frame doth this converse with God possess his soul of! How reverently doth he think of him! What life is there in every name and attribute of God which he heareth or thinketh on! The mention of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his love, his holiness, his truth, how powerful and how pleasant are they to him! when to those that know him but by the hearing of the ear, all these are but like common names and notions; and even to the weaker sort of Christians, whose walking with God is more uneven, and low, interrupted by their sins, and doubts, and fears, this life and glory of a Christian course is less perceived.

And the sweet appropriating and applying works of faith, by which the soul can own his God, and finds himself owned by him, are exercised most easily and happily in these near approaches to God. Our doubts are cherished by our darkness, and that is

much caused by our distance: the nearer the soul doth approach to God, the more distinctly it heareth the voice of mercy, the sweet reconciling invitations of love; and the more clearly it discerneth that goodness and amiableness in God, which maketh it easier to us to believe that he loveth us, or is ready to embrace us; and banisheth all those false and horrid apprehensions of him, which before were our discouragement, and made him seem to us more terrible than amiable. As the ministers and faithful servants of Christ, are ordinarily so misrepresented by the malignant devil, to those that know them not, that they are ready to think them some silly fools, or false-hearted hypocrites, and to shun them as strange undesirable persons; but when they come to a thorough acquaintance with them by a nearer and familiar converse, they see how much they were mistaken, and wronged by their prejudice and belief of slanderers' misreports: even so a weak believer, that is under troubles, in the apprehension of his sin and danger, is apt to hearken to the enemy of God, that would show him nothing but his wrath, and represent God as an enemy to him: and in this case it is exceeding hard for a poor sinner to believe that God is reconciled to him, or loveth him, or intends him good, but he is ready to dread and shun him as an enemy, or as he would fly from a wild beast or murderer, or from fire or water, that would destroy him: and all these injurious thoughts of God are cherished by strangeness and disacquaintance. But as the soul doth fall into an understanding and serious converse with God, and having been often with him, doth find him more merciful than he was by Satan

represented to him, his experience reconcileth his mind to God, and maketh it much easier to him to believe that God is reconciled unto him, when he hath found much better entertainment with God than he expected, and hath observed his benignity, and the treasures of his bounty laid up in Christ, and by him distributed to believers, and hath found him ready to hear and help, and found him the only full and suitable felicitating good, this banisheth his former horrid thoughts, and maketh him ashamed that ever he should think so suspiciously, injuriously, and dishonourably of his dearest God and Father.

Yet I must confess that there are many upright, troubled souls, that are much in reading, prayer, and meditation, that still find it hard to be persuaded of the love of God, and that have much more disquietude and fear since they set themselves to think of God, than they had before. But yet for all this, we may well conclude, that to walk with God is the way to consolation, and tendeth to acquaint us with his love. As for those troubled souls, whose experience is objected against this, some of them are such as are yet but in their return to God, from a life of former sin and misery, and are yet but like the needle in the compass that is shaken, in a trembling motion towards their rest, and not in any settled apprehensions of it. Some of them by the straying of their imaginations too high, and putting themselves upon more than their heads can bear, and by the violence of fears, or other passions, do make themselves incapable of those sweet consolations which else they might find in their converse with God: as a lute, when the strings are broken with

straining, is incapable of making any melody. All of them have false apprehensions of God, and therefore trouble themselves by their own mistakes. And if some perplex themselves by their error, doth it follow that therefore the truth is not comfortable? Is not a father's presence consolatory, because some children are afraid of their fathers, that know them not because of some disguise? And some of God's children walk so unevenly and carelessly before him, that their sins provoke him to hide his face, and to seem to reject them and disown them, and so to trouble them that he may bring them home; but shall the comforts of our Father's love and family be judged of by the fears or smart of those whom he is scourging for their disobedience, or their trial? Seek God with understanding, as knowing his essential properties, and what he will be to them that sincerely and diligently seek him; and then you will quickly have experience, that nothing so much tendeth to quiet and settle a doubting, troubled, unstable soul, as faithfully to walk with God.

But the soul that estrangeth itself from God, may indeed for a time have the quietness of security; but (so far) it will be strange to the assurance of his love, and to true consolation. Expect not that God should follow you with his comforts in your sinfulness and negligence, and cast them into your hearts whilst you neither seek nor mind them; or that he will give you the fruit of his ways in your own ways. Will he be your joy when you forget him? Will he delight your souls with his goodness and amiableness, while you are taking up with other matters,

and think not of him? Can you expect to find the comforts of his family, among his enemies, out of doors? The experience of all the world can tell you, that prodigals, while they are straggling from their Father's house, do never taste the comforts of his embraces; the strangers meddle not with his children's joys: they grow not in the way of ambition, covetousness, vain-glory, or sensuality; but in the way of holy obedience, and of believing contemplations of the divine, everlasting objects of delight. "For, lo, they that are far from him shall perish. He destroyeth them that go a whoring from him. But it is good for us to draw nigh to God."

III. Walking with God is the only course that can prove and make men truly wise. It proves them wise that make so wise and good a choice, and are disposed and skilled in any measure for so high a work. Practical wisdom is the solid, useful, profitable wisdom: and practical wisdom is seen in our choice of good, and refusal of evil, as its most immediate and excellent effect. And no choosing or refusing doth show the wisdom or folly of man so much as that which is about the greatest matters, and on which everlasting life or death depends. He is not thought so wise among men that can write a volume about the orthography or etymology of a word, or can guess what wood the Trojan horse was made of, as he that can bring home gold and pearls, or he that can obtain and manage governments, or he that can cure mortal maladies. For as in lading we difference bulk and value, and take not that for the best commodity which is of greatest quantity or weight, but that which is most precious and of

greatest use; so there is a bulky knowledge, extended far, to a multitude of words and things, which are all of no great use or value; and therefore the knowledge of them is such as they: and there is a precious sort of knowledge, which fixeth upon the most precious things; which being of greatest use and value, do accordingly prove the knowledge such. Nothing will prove a man simply and properly wise, but that which will prove or make him happy. He is wise indeed, that is wise to his own and others' good; and that is indeed his good, which saveth his soul, and maketh him for ever blessed. Though we may admire the cunning of those that can make the most curious engines, or by deceiving others advance themselves, or that can subtilely dispute the most curious niceties, or criticise upon the words of several languages; yet I will never call them wise that are all that while the devil's slaves, the enemies of God, the refusers of grace, and are making haste to endless misery. And I think there is not one of those in hell who were once the subtile men on earth, that now take themselves to have been truly wise, or glory much in the remembrance of such wisdom.

And as the choice doth prove men wise, so the practice of this holy walking with God, doth make them much wiser than they were. As there must be some work of the Spirit to draw men to believe in Christ, and yet the Spirit is promised and given (in a special sort or measure) to them that do believe; so must there be some special wisdom to make men choose to walk with God; but much more is given to them in this holy course. As Solomon was wiser

than most of the world, before he asked wisdom of God, or else he would not have made so wise a choice, and preferred wisdom before the riches and honours of the world; and yet it was a more notable degree of wisdom that was afterwards given him in answer to his prayers: so it is in this case.

There are many undeniable evidences to prove, that walking with God doth more to make men truly wise, than all other learning or policy in the world.

1. He that walketh with God, begins aright, and settles upon a sure foundation; (and we use to say, that a work is half finished that is well begun;) he hath engaged himself to the best and wisest teacher; he is a disciple to him that knoweth all things. He hath taken in infallible principles, and taken them in their proper place and order; he hath learned those truths which will every one become a teacher to him, and help him to that which is yet unlearned. Whereas many that thought they were doctors in Israel, if ever they will be wise and happy, must "become fools, (that is, such as they have esteemed fools,) if ever they will be wise;" and must be called back with Nicodemus to learn Christ's cross, and to be taught that, "that which is born of the flesh is but flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit;" and that therefore they "must be born again" (not only of water, but also of the Spirit) if ever they "will enter into the kingdom of heaven." O miserable beginning! and miserable progress! when men that never soundly learned the mysteries of regeneration, and faith, and love, and self-denial, and mortification, proceed to study names and words, and to turn over

a multitude of books, to fill their brains with airy notions, and their common places with such sayings as may be provision and furniture for their pride and ostentation, and ornament to their style and language; and know not yet what they must do to be saved, and indeed know nothing as they ought to know. As every science has its principles, which are supposed in all the consequential verities; so hath religion as doctrinal and practical, those truths which must be first received, before any other can be received as it ought; and those things which must be first done, before any other can be done, so as to attain their ends. And these truths and duties are principally about God himself, and are known and done effectually by those, and only those, that walk with God, or are devoted to him. It is a lamentable thing to see men immersed in serious studies, even till they grow aged, and to hear them seriously disputing and discoursing about the controversies or difficulties in theology, or inferior sciences, before ever they had any saving knowledge of God, or of the work of the Holy Ghost in the converting and sanctifying of the soul, or how to escape everlasting misery!

2. He that walketh with God hath fixed upon a right end, and is renewing his estimation and intention of it, and daily prosecuting it: and this is the first and greatest part of practical wisdom. When a man once knoweth his end aright, he may better judge of the aptitude and seasonableness of all the means. When we know once that heaven containeth the only felicity of man, it will direct us to heavenly thoughts, and to such spiritual means as are

fitted to that end; if we have the right mark in our eye, we are more like to level at it, than if we mistake our mark. He is the wise man, and only he, that hath steadily fixed his eye upon that blessedness which he was created and redeemed for, and maketh straight towards it, and bends the powers of soul and body, by faithful, constant diligence to obtain it. He that hath rightly and resolvedly determined of his end, hath virtually resolved a thousand controversies that others are unsatisfied and erroneous in. He that is resolved, that his end is to please and glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever, is easily resolved whether a holy life, or a sensual or worldly, be the way; whether the way be godly, or to make a mock at godliness: whether covetousness and riches, ambition and preferment, voluptuousness and fleshly pleasures, be the means to attain his end: whether it will be attained rather by the studying of the word of God, and meditating on it day and night, and by holy conference, and fervent prayer, and an obedient life, or by negligence, or worldiness, or drunkenness, or gluttony, or cards and dice, or beastly filthiness, or injustice and deceit. Know once but whither it is that we are going, and it is easy to know whether the saint, or the swaggerer, be in the way. But a man that doth mistake his end, is out of his way at the first step; and the further he goes, the further he is from true felicity; and the more he erreth, the further he hath to go back again, if ever he return. Every thing that a man doth in the world, which is not for the right end, (the heavenly felicity,) is an act of foolishness and error, how splendid soever the matter or the name,

may make it appear to ignorant men. Every word that an ungodly person speaketh, being not for a right end, is in him but sin and folly, however materially it may be an excellent and useful truth. While a miserable soul hath his back upon God, and his face upon the world, every step he goeth is an act of folly, and tending to his future misery. It can be no act of wisdom, which tendeth to a man's damnation. When such a wretch begins to inquire and bethink him where he is, and whither he is going, and whither he should go, and to think of turning back to God, then, and never till then, he is beginning to come to himself, and to be wise. Till God and glory be the end that he aimeth at, and seriously bends his study, heart, and life, to seek; though a man were searching into the mysteries of nature; though he were studying or discussing the notions of theology; though he were admired for his learning and wisdom by the world, and cried up as the oracle of the earth, he is all the while but playing the fool, and going a more cleanly way to hell than the grosser sinners of the world! For is he wise, that knoweth not whether heaven or earth be better! Whether God or his flesh should be obeyed! Whether everlasting joys, or the transitory pleasures of sin should be preferred? Or that seemeth to be convinced of the truth in these and such like cases, and yet hath not the wit to make his choice, and bend his life according to his conviction? He cannot be wise who practically mistakes his end.

3. He that walketh with God doth know those things with a deep, effectual, heart-changing knowledge, which other men know but superficially, by

the halves, and as in a dream. And true wisdom consisteth in the intensiveness of the knowledge subjectively, as much as in the extensiveness of it objectively. To see a few things in a narrow room perspicuously and clearly, doth show a better eyesight, than in the open air to see many things obscurely, so as scarce to discern any of them aright; (like him that saw men walk like trees.) The clearness and depth of knowledge, which makes it effectual to its proper use, is the greatness and excellency of it: therefore it is, that unlearned men that love and fear the Lord, may well be said to be incomparably more wise and knowing men than the most learned that are ungodly. As he hath more riches that hath a little gold or jewels, than he that hath many load of stones; so he that hath a deep, effectual knowledge of God the Father, and the Redeemer, and of the life to come, is wiser and more knowing than he that hath only a notional knowledge of the same things, and of a thousand more. A wicked man hath so much knowledge, as teacheth him to speak the same words of God, and Christ, and heaven, which a true believer speaks; but not so much as to work in him the same affections and choice, nor so much as to cause him to do the same work. As it is a far more excellent kind of knowledge which a man hath of any country by travel and habitation there, than that which cometh but by reading or report; or which a man hath of meat, of fruits, of wines, by eating and drinking, than that which another hath by hearsay: so is the inward heart-affecting knowledge of a true believer, more excellent than the flashy notions of the ungodly.

Truth, simply as truth, is not the highest and most excellent object of the mind: but good, as good, must be apprehended by the understanding, and commended to the will, which entertaineth it with complacency, adhereth to it with choice and resolution, prosecuteth it with desire and endeavour, and enjoyeth it with delight. And though it be the understanding which apprehendeth it, yet it is the heart or will that relisheth it, and tasteth the greatest sweetness in it, working upon it with some mixture of internal sense, (which hath made some ascribe a knowledge of good, as such, to the will.) And it is the will's intention that causeth the understanding to be denominated practical: and therefore I may well say, that it is wisdom indeed when it reacheth to the heart. No man knoweth the truth of God so well as he that most firmly believeth him: and no man knoweth the goodness of God so well as he that loveth him most. No man knoweth his power and mercy so well as he that doth most confidently trust him: and no man knoweth his justice and dreadfulness so well as he that feareth him. No man knoweth or believeth the glory of heaven so well as he that most esteemeth, desireth, and seeketh it, and hath the most heavenly heart and conversation. No man believeth in Jesus Christ so well, as he that giveth up himself to him, with the greatest love, and thankfulness, and trust, and obedience. As James saith, "Show me thy faith by thy works," so say I, let me know the measure and value of my knowledge by my heart and life. That is wisdom indeed, which conformeth a man to God, and saveth his soul: this only will be owned

as wisdom to eternity, when dreaming notions will prove but folly.

4. He that walketh with God hath an infallible rule, and taketh the right course to have the best acquaintance with it, and skill to use it. The doctrine that informeth him is divine: it is from heaven, and not of men: and therefore if God be wiser than man, he is able to make his disciples wisest; and teaching will more certainly and powerfully illuminate. Many among men have pretended to infallibility, that never could justify their pretensions, but have confuted them by their own mistakes and crimes; but none can deny the infallibility of God. He never yet was deceived, or did deceive: he erreth not, nor teacheth error. Nicodemus knew Christ was to be believed, when he knew that he was "a teacher come from God." Christ knew that the Jews themselves durst not deny the truths of John's doctrine, if he could but convince them that it was "from heaven, and not of men." It is impossible for God to lie: it is the devil that "was a liar from the beginning," and is yet the father of lies. No wonder if they believe lies that follow such a teacher: and those that follow the flesh and the world, do follow the devil. They that will believe what their fleshly interests and lusts persuade them to believe, do believe what the devil persuadeth them to believe; for he persuadeth them by these, and for these. What marvel then, if there be found men in the world, that can believe that holiness is hypocrisy, or a needless thing? That those are the worst men that are most careful to please God! that the world is more worthy of their care

and labour, than their salvation is! that the pleasures of sin for a season are more desirable, than the everlasting happiness of the saints! that cards and dice, and mirth and lust, and wealth and honour, are matters more delectable than prayer, and meditating on the word of God, and loving him, and obeying him, and waiting in the hopes of life eternal! that gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and covetous persons, may enter into the kingdom of God, &c. What wonder, if a thousand such damnable lies, are believed by the disciples of the father of lies? What wonder, if there are so many saint-haters and God-haters in the world, as to fill the earth with persecutions and cruelties, or make a scorn of that which God most highly valueth, and all this under pretences of order, or unity, or justice, or something that is good, and therefore fit to palliate their sin! Is there any thing so false, or foul, or wicked, that Satan will not teach his followers? Is he grown modest, or moderate, or holy, or just? Is he reconciled to Christ, to Scripture, to godliness, or to the godly? Or is his kingdom of darkness at an end? And hath he lost the earth? Or are men therefore none of the servants of the devil, because they were baptized, (as Simon Magus was,) and call and think themselves the servants of Christ? As if still it were not the art by which he gets and keeps disciples, to suffer them to wear the livery of Christ, and to use his name, that he may thus keep possession of them in peace, who else would be frighted from him, and fly to Christ! He will give them leave to study arts and sciences, and to understand things excellent of inferior use, so be it they

will be deceived by him in the matters of God and their salvation. He can allow them to be learned lawyers, excellent physicians, philosophers, politicians, to be skilful artists, so be it they will follow him in sin to their damnation, and will overlook the "truth that should set them free." Yea he will permit them (when there is no remedy) to study the holy Scriptures, if he may but be the expounder and applier of it. Yea he will permit them notionally to understand it, if they will not learn by it to be converted, to be holy, and to be saved. He can suffer them to be eminent divines, so they will not be serious Christians. Thus is the world by the grand deceiver buried in darkness to perdition, being "taken captive by him at his will." But the sanctified are all illuminated by the Holy Ghost, by whom their eyes are so effectually opened, that they "are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." "The Father of glory hath given them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Certainly that illumination of the Holy Ghost, which is so often mentioned in Scripture as given to all true believers, is not a fancy, nor an insignificant name: and if it signify any thing, it signifieth somewhat that is much above the teaching of man. All that walk with God are taught of God! And can man teach like God? God hath access to the heart, and there he doth transcribe his laws, and put them into our inward parts. And they that walk with

him have not only his word to read, but his Spirit to help them to understand it: and being with him, in his family, (yea, he dwelleth in them, and they in him,) he is ready at hand to resolve their doubts: when he gave them his fear, he gave them the "beginning of wisdom." He causeth them to "incline their ear to wisdom;" and to "apply their hearts unto it;" "and maketh them to know it in the hidden parts."

It is his law that they have determined to make their rule: they live as under his authority: they are more observant of his will and government, than of any laws or government of man. And as they obey man in and for the Lord, so they do it in subordination to him, and therefore not against him and his laws, which being the standard of justice, and the rule of rulers, and of subjects both, they are in the safest way of unerring wisdom, who walk with God according to that rule; and refuse to turn aside, though commanded by man, or enticed by Satan, the world, or the flesh.

5. He that walketh with God is the most considerate person, and therefore hath great advantage to be wise. The frequent and serious thoughts of God, awaken all the powers of the soul, so that drowsiness doth not hinder the understanding, and so occasion its deceit. There is scarcely a more common and powerful cause of men's folly and delusion and perdition in all the world, than that sleepiness and stupidity which hinder reason from the vigorous performance of its office. In this senseless case, though a man both know and consider of the same truths, which in their nature are

most powerful to cleanse and govern and save his soul, yet sluggishness doth enervate them: he knoweth them as if he knew them not, and considereth them as if he never thought of them. They work little more upon him, than if he believed them not, or had never heard of them. Even as a dream of the greatest matters, moveth not the sleeper from his pillow. In this senseless state, the devil can do almost any thing with a sinner. He can make him sin against his knowledge: and when conscience hath frighted him into some kind of penitence, and made him cry out, 'I have sinned and done foolishly,' and caused him to promise to do so no more; yet doth the devil prevail with him to go on, and to break his promises, as if he had never been convinced of his sins, or confessed them, or seen any reason or necessity to amend: he doth but imprison the truth in unrighteousness, and bury it in a senseless heart: whereas if you could but awaken all the powers of his soul, to give this same truth its due entertainment, and take it deeper into his heart, it would make him even scorn the baits of sin, and see that the ungodly are beside themselves, and make him presently resolve and set upon a holy life. And hence it is, that sickness, which causeth men to receive the sentence of death, doth usually make men bewail their former sinful lives, and marvel that they could be before so sottish as to resist such known and weighty truths: and it makes them purpose and promise reformation, and wish themselves in the case of those that they were wont before to deride and scorn; because now the truth is more deeply received and digested, by their awakened souls, and

appeareth in its proper evidence and strength. There is no man but must acknowledge that the same truth doth at one time command his soul, which at another time seems of little force. It is a wonder to observe how differently the same consideration worketh with a man when he is awakened, and when he is in a secure stupid state.

Now this is his advantage that walks with God. He is much more frequently than others awakened to a serious apprehension of the things which he understandeth. The thoughts of the presence of the most holy God will not suffer him to be secure and senseless as others are, or as he is himself, when he turneth aside from this heavenly conversation. He hath in God such exceeding transcendent excellencies, such greatness, such goodness continually to behold, that it keepeth his soul in a much more serious, lively frame than any other means could keep it in: so that whenever any truth or duty is presented to him, all his faculties are awake and ready to observe and improve it. A sermon, or a good book, or godly conference, or a mercy, when a man hath been with God in prayer and contemplation, will relish better with him, and sink much deeper than at another time. Nay, one serious thought of God himself, will do more to make a man truly and solidly wise, than all the reading and learning in the world, which shuts him out.

6. Walking with God doth fix the mind, and keep it from diversions and vagaries, and consequently much helpeth to make men wise. A straggling mind is empty and unfurnished. He that hath no dwelling, for the most part hath no

wealth. Wandering is the beggar's life. Men do but bewilder and lose themselves, and not grow wise, whose thoughts are ranging in the corners of the earth, and are like masterless dogs, that run up and down according to their fancy, and may go any whither, but have business no where. The creature will not fix the soul; but God is the centre of all our thoughts: in him only they may unite, and fix, and rest. He is the only loadstone that can effectually attract and hold it steadfast to himself. Therefore he that walks with God is the most constant and unmoveable of men. Let prosperity or adversity come; let the world be turned upside down, and the mountains be hurled into the sea, yet he changeth not; let men allure or threat, let them scorn or rage, let laws, and customs, and governments, and interest change, he is still the same. For he knoweth that God is still the same, and that his word changeth not. Let that be death one year, which was the way to reputation another, and let the giddy world turn about as the seasons of the year, this changeth not his mind and life (though in things lawful he is of an yielding temper:) for he knoweth that the interest of his soul doth not change with the humours or interests of men: he still feareth sinning, for he knoweth that judgment is still drawing on, in all changes and seasons whatsoever: he is still set upon the pleasing of the most holy God, whoever be uppermost among men; as knowing that the God whom he serveth is able to deliver him from man, but man is not able to deliver him from God. He still goeth on in the holy path, as knowing that heaven is as sure and as desirable as ever it

was. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid."

7. He that walketh with God, hath the great master-truths upon his heart, which are the standard of the rest, and the stock, as it were, out of which they spring. The great truths about God, and grace, and glory, have a greater power than many hundred truths of an inferior nature. And moreover, such a one is sure that he shall be wise in the greatest and most necessary points. He is guilty of no ignorance or error that shall keep him out of heaven, or hinder his acceptance with his God. And if he be wise enough to please God and to be saved, he is wise indeed.

8. Walking with God doth take the vizor off deluding things, and keepeth us out of the reach and power of those objects and arguments which are the instruments of deceit. When a man hath been believingly and seriously with God, how easily can he see through the sophistry of the tempting world! How easily can he practically confute the reasonings of the flesh, and discern the dotage of the seeming subtilties of wicked men, that will needs think they have reason for that which is displeasing to their Maker, and tends to the damning of their souls! So far as a man is conversant with God, so far he is sensible, that all things are nothing which can be offered as a price to hire him to sin: and that the name of preferment, and honour, and wealth, or of disgrace, and imprisonment, and death, are words

almost of no signification, as to the tempter's ends, to draw the soul from God and duty. It is men that know not God, and know not what it is to walk with him, that think these words so big and powerful, to whom wealth and honour signify more than God and heaven; and poverty, disgrace and death, signify more than God's displeasure and everlasting punishment in hell. As it is easy to cheat a man that is far from the light, so is it easy to deceive the most learned man that is far from God.

9. Walking with God doth greatly help us against the deceitful and erroneous disposition of our own hearts. The will hath a very great power upon the understanding: and therefore ungodly, fleshly men will very hardly receive any truth which crosseth the carnal interest or disposition: and will hardly let go any error that feedeth them; because their corrupted wills are a bias to their understandings, and make them desperately partial in all their reading and hearing, and hypocritical in their prayers and inquiries after truth. Interest and corruption lock up their hearts from their own observation. Whereas a man that walketh with God, that is jealous, and holy, and just, and a searcher of the heart, is driven from hypocrisy, and forced to behave himself as in the open light, and to do all as in the sight of all the world, as knowing that the sight of God is of far greater concern and regard. The partiality, corruption, and bias of the heart, is detected and shamed by the presence of God. Therefore to walk with God is to walk in the light, and as children of the light, and not in darkness. And he that doth truth "cometh to the light, that his deeds

might be manifest, that they are wrought in God: when every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. And this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil." It tendeth therefore exceedingly to make men wise, to walk with God, because it is a walking in the light, and in such a presence as most powerfully prevaileth against that hypocrisy, deceitfulness and partiality of the heart, which is the common cause of damning error.

10. Lastly, they that walk with God are entitled by many promises, to the guidance and direction of his Spirit. And blessed are those that have such a guide: at once a light in the world without them, and a light immediately from God within them. For so far as he is received and worketh in them, he will lead them into truth, and save them from deceit and folly, and having " guided them by his counsel, will afterwards take them unto glory." Whereas the ungodly are led by the flesh, and often " given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels;" till at last " the fools do say in their hearts, there is no God;" " and they become corrupt and abominable, eating up the people of the Lord as bread, and call not on his name." " Deceiving and being deceived; sensual, having not the Spirit;" " who shall receive the reward of their unrighteousness, as accounting it pleasure to riot in the daytime."

IV. Another benefit of walking with God is, that it maketh men good, as well as wise. It is the

most excellent means for the advancement of man's soul to the highest degree of holiness attainable in this life. If conversing with good men doth powerfully tend to make men good; conversing with God must needs be more effectual; which may appear in these particulars.

1. The apprehensions of the presence and attributes of God, do most effectually check the stirrings of corruption, and rebuke all the vicious inclinations and motions of the soul: even the most secret sin of the heart is rebuked by his presence, as well as the most open transgression of the life: for the thoughts of the heart are open to his view. All that is done before God, is done as in the open light: nothing of it can be hid: no sin can have the encouragement of secrecy to embolden it. It is all committed in the presence of the universal King and Lawgiver of the world, who hath forbidden it. It is done before him that most abhorreth it, and will never be reconciled to it. It is done before him that is the Judge of the world, and will shortly pass the sentence on us according to what we have done in the body. It standeth up in his presence who is of infinite majesty and perfection, and therefore most to be reverenced and honoured: and therefore if the presence of a wise, and grave, and venerable person will restrain men from sin, the presence of God apprehended seriously, will do it much more. It is committed before him who is our dearest friend, and tender Father, and chiefest Benefactor: and therefore ingenuity, gratitude and love will all rise up against it in those that walk with God. There is that in God, before the eyes of those that walk with him,

which is most contrary to sin, and most powerful against it of any thing in the world. Every one will confess, that if men's eyes were opened to see the Lord in glory standing over them, it would be the most powerful means to restrain them from transgressing. The drunkard would not then venture upon his cups: the fornicator would have a cooling for his lusts: the swearer would be afraid to take his Maker's name in vain: the profane would scarcely presume to scorn or persecute a holy life. And he that walketh with God, though he see him not corporally, yet seeth him by faith, and liveth as in his presence; and therefore must needs be restrained from sin, as having the means which is next to the sight of God. If pride should begin to stir in one that walks with God, O what a powerful remedy is at hand! How effectually would the presence of the great and holy God rebuke it! and constrain us to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If worldly love, or carnal lust, should stir in such a one, how powerfully would the terrors of the Lord repress it; and his majesty rebuke it; and his love and goodness overcome it! If worldly cares or murmuring discontents begin to trouble such a one; how effectually will the goodness, the all-sufficiency and the faithfulness of God allay them, and quiet and satisfy the soul, and cause it to be offended at its own offence, and to chide itself for its repinings and distrust! If passion arise and begin to discompose us, how powerfully will the presence of God rebuke it! and the reverence of his majesty, and the sense of

his authority and pardoning grace will assuage it, and shame us into silent quietness! Who dare let out his passions upon man, in the presence of his Maker, that apprehendeth his presence? The same I might say of all other sins.

2. The presence and attributes of God apprehended by those that walk with him, is the potent remedy against temptations. Who will once turn an eye to the gold and glory of the world, that is offered him to allure to sin, if he see God stand by? Who would be tempted to lust or any sinful pleasure, if he observe the presence of the Lord? Satan can never come in so ill a time with his temptations, and have so little hope to speed, as when the soul is contemplating the attributes of God, or taken up in prayer with him, or any way apprehensive of his presence. The soul that faithfully walks with God, hath enough at hand in him to answer all temptations. And the further any man is from God, and the less he knoweth him, the more temptations can do upon him.

3. The presence of God affordeth the most powerful motives to good, to those that walk with him. There is no grace in man, but is from God, and may find in God its proper object or incentive. As God is God, above the creature transcendently and infinitely in all perfections, so all the motives to goodness which are fetched from him, are transcendently above all that may be fetched from any creature. He that liveth always by the fire, or in the sunshine, is most like to be warm. He that is most with God, will be most like to God in holiness. Frequent and serious converse with him, doth most

deeply imprint his communicable attributes on the heart, and make there the clearest impression of his image. Believers have learned by their own experience, that one hour's serious prayer, or meditation, in which they can get nigh to God in the Spirit, doth more advance their grace, than any help that the creature can afford them.

4. Moreover, those that walk with God have not only a powerful, but a universal incentive for the actuating and increasing of every grace. Knowledge, and faith, and fear, and love, and trust, and hope, and obedience, and zeal, and all have in God their proper objects and incentives. One creature may be useful to us in one thing, and another in another thing; but God is the most effectual mover of all his graces: and that in a holy harmony and order. Indeed he hath no greater motive to draw us to love him, and fear him, and trust him, and obey him, than himself. "It is life eternal to know him in his Son:" and that is, not only because it entitleth to life eternal, but also because it is the beginning and incentive of that life of holiness which will be eternal.

5. Moreover, those that walk with God, have a constant as well as a powerful and universal incentive to exercise and increase their graces. Other helps may be out of the way: their preachers may be silenced or removed: their friends may be scattered or taken from them: their books may be forbidden, or not at hand: but God is always ready and willing; they have leave at all times to come to him, and be welcome. Whenever they are willing they may go to him by prayer or contemplation, and find all in

him which they can desire. If they want not hearts, they shall find no want of any thing in God. At what time soever fear would torment them, they may draw near and put their trust in him. He will be a sure and speedy refuge for them, a very present help in trouble. Whenever coldness or lukewarmness would extinguish the work of grace, they may go to him, and find those streams of flaming love flow from him, those strong attractives, those wonderful mercies, those terrible judgments, of which, while they are musing, the fire may again wax hot within them.

6. Lastly, by way of encouraging reward, God useth to give abundantly of his grace, to those that walk most faithfully with him. He will show most love to those that most love him. He will be nearest to them that most desirously draw nigh to him; while he forsaketh those that forsake him, and turneth away from those that turn away from him. "The hand of our God is for good upon all them that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him."

Thus it is apparent in all these evidences, that walking with God, is not only a discovery of the goodness that men have, but the only way to increase their grace, and make them better. O what a sweet humility, and seriousness, and spirituality appeareth in the conference, or conversation, or both, of those that newly come from a believing, close converse with God! When they that come from men and books, may have but a common mind or life. And those that come from the business and pleasure of the world and flesh, and from the company of fool-

ish, riotous gallants, may come defiled, as the swine out of the mire!

V. Lastly, to walk with God is the best preparation for times of suffering, and for the day of death. As we must be judged according to what we have done in the body; so the nearer we find ourselves to judgment, the more we shall be constrained to judge ourselves according to what we have done, and shall the more perceive the effect upon our souls.

That this is so excellent a preparative for sufferings and death, will appear by the consideration of these particulars.

1. They that walk with God are most safe from all destructive sufferings; and shall have none but what are sanctified to their good. They are near to God, where destruction cometh not; as the chicken under the wings of the hen. They walk with him that will not lead them to perdition: that will not neglect them, nor sell them for nought, nor expose them to the will of men and devils, though he may suffer them to be tried for their good. No one can take them out of his hands. Be near to him, and you are safe: the destroyer cannot fetch you thence. He can fetch you (when the time is come) from the side of your merriest companions, and dearest friends; from the presence of the greatest princes; from the strongest tower, or most sumptuous palace, or from your heaps of riches, in your securest health: but he cannot take you from the arms of Christ, nor from under the wings of your Creator's love. "For there is no God like him, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, who keepeth covenant and mercy with his servants, that walk before him with all their heart."

However we are used in our Father's presence, we are sure it shall be for good in the latter end: for he wanteth neither power nor love to deliver us, if he saw deliverance to be best.

2. Walking with God is the surest way to obtain a certainty of his special love, and of our salvation. And what an excellent preparative for sufferings or death such assurance is, I need not tell any considerate believer. How easy may it be to us to suffer poverty, disgrace, or wrongs, or the pains of sickness or death, when once we are certain that we shall not suffer the pains of hell! How cheerfully may we go out of this troublesome world, and leave the greatest prosperity behind us, when we are sure to live in heaven for ever! Even an infidel will say, that he could suffer or die, if he could but be certain to be glorified in heaven when he is dead!

3. Walking with God doth mortify the flesh, and all the affections and lusts thereof. The soul that is taken up with higher matters, and daily seeth things more excellent, becometh as dead to the things below: and thus it weaneth us from all that in the world seemeth most desirable to carnal men. And when the flesh is mortified, and the world is nothing to us, or but as a dead or loathsome carcass, what is there left to be very troublesome in any suffering from the world? Or to make us loath by death to leave it? It is men that know not God, that overvalue the profits and honours of the world; and men that never felt the comforts of communion with God, that set too much by the pleasures of the flesh: and it is men that set too much by these, that make so great a matter of suffering. It is he that

basely overvalueth wealth, that whineth and repineth when he comes to poverty. It is he that sets too much by his honour, and being befooled by his pride, doth greatly esteem the thoughts or applauding words of men, that swelleth against those that disesteem him, and breaketh his heart when he falleth into disgrace. He that is cheated out of his wits by the pomp and splendour of a high and prosperous estate, doth think he is undone when he is brought low. But it is not so with him that walks with God: for being taken up with far higher things, he knoweth the vanity of these. As he seeth not in them any thing that is worthy of his strong desires, so neither any thing that is worthy of much lamentation when they are gone. He never thought that a shadow, or feather, or a blast of wind could make him happy; and he cannot think that the loss of these can make him miserable. He that is taken up with God, hath a higher interest and business, and findeth not himself so much concerned in the storms or calms that are here below, as others are, who know no better, and never minded higher things.

4. Walking with God doth much overcome the fear of man. The fear of him who can destroy both soul and body in hell fire, will extinguish the fear of them that can but kill the body. The threats or frowns of a worm are inconsiderable to him that daily walketh with the great and dreadful God, and hath his power and word for his security. As Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompence of reward; so he feared not the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible."

5. Walking with God doth much prepare for sufferings and death, in that it breedeth quietness in the conscience. So that when all is at peace within, it will be easy to suffer any thing from without. Though there is no proper merit in our works to comfort us, yet it is an unspeakable consolation to a slandered, persecuted man to be able to say, "These evil sayings are spoken falsely of me, for the sake of Christ; and I suffer not as an evil doer, but as a Christian." And it is matter of very great peace to a man that is hasting unto death, to be able to say as Hezekiah, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." And as Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," &c. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Such a testimony of conscience is a precious cordial to a suffering or a dying man. The time we have spent in a holy and heavenly conversation, will be exceedingly sweet in the last review, when time spent in sinful vanity, and idleness, and in wordly and fleshly designs, will be grievous and tormenting. The day is coming, and is even at hand, when those that are now the most hardened infidels, or obstinate, presumptuous sinners, or scornful, malicious enemies of holiness, would wish, and wish a thousand times, that they had spent that life in serious, obedient, walking with God, which they

spent in seeking worldly wealth, and laying up a treasure on earth, and feeding the inordinate desires of their flesh. I tell you, it is walking with God, that is the only way to have a sound and quiet conscience; and he that is healing and settling his conscience upon the love of God and the grace of Christ, in the time of prosperity, is making the wisest preparation for adversity; and the preparation thus made so long before, (perhaps twenty, or forty, or threescore years, or more) is as truly useful and comfortable at a dying hour, as that part which is made immediately before. I know that besides this general preparation, there should be also a particular, special preparation for sufferings and death; but yet this general part is the chief and most necessary part. A man that hath walked in his lifetime with God, shall certainly be saved, though death surprise him unexpectedly, without any more particular preparation. But a particular preparation, without either such a life, or such a heart, as would cause it, if he had recovered, is no sufficient preparation at all, and will not serve to any man's salvation. Alas! what a pitiful provision doth that man make for death and for salvation, who neglecteth his soul, despiseth the commands of God, and disregardeth the promises of eternal life, till he is ready to die, and then crieth out, "I repent, I am sorry for my sin, I would I had lived better;" and this only from the constraint of fear, without any such love to God and holiness, which would make him walk with God if he should recover. What if the priest absolve this man from all his sins? Doth God therefore absolve him? Or shall he thus be saved? No, it is certain

that all the sacraments and absolutions in the world, will never serve to save such a soul, without that grace which must make it new and truly holy. The absolution of a minister of Christ, which is pronounced in his name, is a very great comfort to the truly penitent; for such God hath first pardoned by his general act of oblivion in the gospel, and it is God that sendeth his messenger to them, (in sacraments and ministerial absolution,) with that pardon particularised and applied by themselves. But where the heart is not truly penitent and converted, that person is not pardoned by the gospel, as being not in the covenant, or a child of promise; and therefore the pardon of a minister, being upon mistake, or to an unqualified person, can reach no further than to admit him into the esteem of men, and to the communion and outward privileges of the church, (which is a poor comfort to a soul that must lie in hell,) but it can never admit him into the kingdom of heaven. God indeed may approve the act of his ministers, if they go according to his rule, and deal in church administrations with those that make a credible profession of faith and holiness, as if they had true faith and holiness; but yet, he will not therefore make such ministerial acts effectual to the saving of unbelieving or unholy souls. Nay (because I have found many sensual, ungodly people inclining to turn Papists, because with them they can have a quick and easy pardon of their sins, by the pope, or by the absolution of the priest) let me tell such, that if they understand what they do, even this cheat is too thin to quiet their defiled consciences; for even the Papist's school doctors do conclude,

that when the priest absolveth an impenitent sinner, or one that is not qualified for pardon, such a one is not loosed or pardoned in heaven. An erring key doth neither lock out of, nor let into heaven. A godly believer shall be saved though the priest condemn him; and an unbeliever, or ungodly person, shall be condemned by God, though he be absolved by the priest.

Nay, if you have not walked with God in the Spirit, but walked after the flesh, though your repentance should be sound and true at the last, it will yet very hardly serve to comfort you, though it may serve to your salvation; because you will very hardly get any assurance that it is sincere. It is dangerous lest it should prove but the effect of fear, (which will not save) when it cometh not till death do fright you to it. You see, then, how much it is needful to the peace of conscience at the hour of death, that you walk with God in the time of life.

6. Moreover, to walk with God is an excellent preparation for sufferings and death, because it tendeth to acquaint the soul with God, and to embolden it both to go to him in prayer, and to trust on him, and expect salvation from him. He that walketh with God is so much used to holy prayer, that he is a man of prayer, and is skilled in it, and hath tried what prayer can do with God; so that, in the hour of his extremity, he is not to seek either for a God to pray to, or a Mediator to intercede for him, or a Spirit of adoption to enable him as a child to fly for help to his reconciled Father. And having not only been frequently with God, but frequently entertained and accepted by him, and had his prayers heard and granted, it is a great encou-

ragement to an afflicted soul in the hour of distress, to go to such a God for help. And it is a dreadful thing when a soul is ready to go out of the world, to have no comfortable knowledge of God, or skill to pray to him, or encouragement to expect acceptance with him; to think that he must presently appear before a God whom he never knew, nor heartily loved, being never acquainted with that communion with him in the way of grace, which is the way to communion in glory: O what a terrible thought is this! But how comfortable is it when the soul can say, "I know whom I have believed. The God that afflicteth me is he that loveth me, and hath manifested his love to me by his daily attractive, assisting, and accepting grace. I am going by death to see him intuitively, whom I have often seen by the eye of faith; and to live with him in heaven, with whom I lived here on earth: from whom, and through whom, and to whom, was my life! I go not to an enemy, nor an utter stranger, but to that God who was the spring, the ruler, the guide, the strength, and the comfort of my life! He hath heard me so oft, that I cannot think he will now reject me. He hath so often comforted my soul, that I will not believe he will now thrust me into hell. He hath mercifully received me so oft, that I cannot believe he will now refuse me. Those that come to him in the way of grace, I have found he will in nowise cast out." As strangeness to God doth fill the soul with distrustful fears, so walking with him doth breed that humble confidence, which is a wonderful comfort in the hour of distress, and a happy preparation to sufferings and death.

7. Lastly, to walk with God, doth increase the love of God in the soul, which is the heavenly tincture, and inclineth it to look upward, and being weary of a sinful flesh and world, to desire to be perfected with God. How happy a preparation for death is this, when it is but the passage to that God with whom we desire to be, and to that place where we fain would dwell for ever! To love the state and place that we are going to, being made connatural and suitable thereto, will much overcome the fears of death. But for a soul that is acquainted with nothing but this life, and savoureth nothing but earth and flesh, and hath no connaturality with the things above, for such a soul to be surprised with the tidings of death, alas! how dreadful must it be.

And thus I have showed you the benefits that come by walking with God, which if you love yourselves with a rational love, methinks should resolve every impartial, considerate reader, to give up himself without delay, to so desirable a course of life. Or, if he have begun it, to follow it more cheerfully and faithfully than he had done.

CHAP. IX.

Our obligations for walking with God.

I AM next to show you that believers have special obligations to this holy course of life, and therefore are doubly faulty if they neglect it: though indeed, to

neglect it totally, or in the main drift of their lives, is a thing inconsistent with a living faith.

Consider, 1. If you are true Christians, your relations engage you to walk with God. Is he not your reconciled Father, and you his children in a special sense? And whom should children dwell with, but with their Father? You were glad when he received you into his covenant, that he would enter into so near a relation to you, as he expresseth: "I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And do you draw back, as if you repented of your covenant; and were not only weary of the duty, but of the privileges and benefits of your relation? You may have access to God when others are shut out: your prayers may be heard when the prayers of the wicked are abominable: you may be welcome, when the worldlings, and ambitious, and carnal are despised. He that dwelleth in the highest heaven, is willing to look to you with respect, and "dwell with you, when he beholdeth the proud afar off." And yet will you not come that may be welcome? Doth he put such a difference between you and others, as to feed you as children at his table, while others are called dogs, and are without the doors, and have but your crumbs and leavings? And yet will you be so foolish and unthankful, as to run out of your Father's presence, and choose to be without among the dogs? How came your Father's presence to be so grievous to you? and the privileges of his family to seem so vile? Is it not some unchildlike carriage? the guilt of some disobedience or contempt that hath first caused this? Or have you

fallen again in love with fleshly pleasures, and some vanity of the world? Or have you had enough of God and godliness, till you begin to grow weary of him? If so, you never truly knew him. However it be, if you grow as indifferent to God, do not wonder if shortly you find him set as light by you. And believe it, the day is not far off, in which the Fatherly relation of God, and the privileges of children, will be more esteemed by you: when all things else forsake you, in your last distress, you will be loath that God should then forsake you, or seem as a stranger to hide his face. Then you will cry out, as the afflicted church, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength? the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father; though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." Nothing but God, and his fatherly relation, will then support you. Attend him therefore, and with reverent, obedient cheerfulness and delight, converse with him as with your dearest Father. For since the beginning of the world, men have not known by sensible evidence, either of the ear or the eye, "besides God himself, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Though he be "wroth with us because we have sinned, yet doth he meet him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, that remembereth him in his ways." Say not, I have played abroad so long that I dare not now go home: I have sinned so greatly, that I dare not

speak to him, or look him in the face. Come yet but with a penitent, returning heart, and thou mayest be accepted through the Prince of Peace. Prodigals find better entertainment than they did expect, when once they do but resolve for home. If he allow us to begin with "Our Father which art in heaven," we may boldly proceed to ask forgiveness of our trespasses, and whatever else is truly good for us. But, alas, as our iniquities seduce us away from God, so the guilt of them affrighteth some from returning to him, and the love of them corrupteth the hearts of others, and makes them too indifferent as to their communion with him; so that too many of his children live as if they did not know their Father, or had forgotten him. We may say as Isa. lxiv. 6—9. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away: and there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities: but now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people." O do not provoke your Father to disown you, or to withdraw his help, or hide his face, or to send the rod to call you home! for if you do, you will wish you had known the privileges of his presence, and had kept nearer to him! Be not so unnatural, so unthankful, so unkind, as to be weary of your Father's presence,

(and such a Father's too) and to take more delight in any others.

Moreover, you are related to God in Christ, as a wife unto a husband, as to covenant union, and nearness and dearness of affection, and as to his tender care of you for your good: and is it seemly, is it wisely or gratefully done of you, to desire rather the company of others, and delight in creatures more than him? How affectionately doth thy Maker call himself the husband of his people! And can thy heart commit adultery, and forsake him? "My covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them, saith the Lord." O put not God to exercise his jealousy. It is one of his terrible attributes, to be "a jealous God." And can he be otherwise to thee, when thou lovest not his converse or company, and carest not how long thou art from him in the world? Woe to thee if he once say as Hos. ii. 2. "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband."

Nay, more than this, if you are Christians, you are members of the body of Christ; and, therefore, how can you withdraw yourselves from him, and not feel the pain and torment of so sore a wound or dislocation? You cannot live without a constant dependance on him, and communication from him: "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman: abide in me and I in you.—I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

So near are you to Christ, that he delighteth to

acquaint you with his secrets? O how many mysteries doth he reveal to those that walk with him, which carnal strangers never know! mysteries of wisdom! mysteries of love and saving grace! mysteries of Scripture, and mysteries of Providence! mysteries felt by inward experience, and mysteries revealed, foreseen by faith! Not only the strangers that pass by the doors, but even the common servants of the family, are unacquainted with the secret operations of the Spirit, and entertainments of grace, and joy in believing, which those that walk with God either do or may possess. Therefore Christ calleth you friends, as being more than servants. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I call you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." It is true, for all this, that every true Christian hath reason (and is apt) to complain of his darkness and distance from God. Alas! they know so little of him, and of the mysteries of his love and kingdom, that sometimes they are apt to think that they are indeed but utter strangers to him; but this is, because there is infinitely more still unknown to them than they know! What! can the silly shallow creature comprehend his infinite Creator? or shall we know all that is to be known in heaven before we enjoy all that is to be enjoyed in heaven? It is no more wonder to hear a believer pant and mourn after a fuller knowledge of God, and nearer access to him, than to seek after heaven, where this will be his happiness. But yet, though his knowledge of God be small, com-

pared with his ignorance, that little knowledge of God which he hath attained, is more mysterious, sublime, and excellent, than all the learning of the greatest unsanctified scholars in the world. Walk with him according to the nearness of your relations to him, and you shall have this excellent knowledge of his mysteries, which no books or teachers alone can give. You shall be effectually touched at the heart with the truths which others do ineffectually hear: you shall be powerfully moved, when they are but ineffectually exhorted. When they only hear the voice without them, you shall hear the voice within you, and as it were behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it. O that you could duly value such a friend, to watch over you, and for you, and dwell in you, and tell you faithfully of every danger, and of every duty, and teach you to know good and evil, and what to choose, and what to refuse! how closely and delightfully would you converse with such a blessed friend, if you rightly valued him!

2. Moreover, you that are the servants of God, have by your covenant and profession, renounced and forsaken all things else (as they stand in any opposition to him or competition with him) and have resigned yourselves wholly to him alone; and, therefore, with him must you converse, and be employed, unless you will forsake your covenant. You knew first that it was your interest to forsake the world and to turn to God; you knew the world would not serve your turn, nor be instead of God to you either in life, or at death; and upon this knowledge it was that you changed your master, and changed your

minds, and changed your way, your work, your hopes. And do you dream now that you were mistaken? Do you begin to think that the world is fitter to be your God or happiness? If not, you must still confess that both your interest and your covenant do oblige you to turn your hearts and minds from the things which you have renounced, and to walk with him that you have taken for your God, and to obey him whom you have taken for your King and Judge, and to keep close to him with purest love, whom you have taken for your everlasting portion. Mark what you are minding all the day, while you are neglecting God: is it not something that you have renounced? and did not you renounce it upon sufficient cause? was it not a work of your most serious deliberation? and of as great wisdom as any that ever you performed? if it were, turn not back in your hearts again from God to the renounced creature. You have had many a lightning from heaven into your understandings, to bring you to see the difference between them; you have had many a teaching, and many a warning, and many a striving of the Spirit, before you were prevailed with to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and to give up yourself entirely and absolutely to God. Nay, did it not cost you the smart of some afflictions, before you would be made so wise? and did it not cost you many a gripe of conscience, and many a terrible thought of hell, and of the wrath of God, before you would be heartily engaged to him in his covenant? And will you now live as strangely and neglectfully towards him, as if those days were quite forgotten? and as if you had never felt such things?

and as if you had never been so convinced or resolved? O Christians, take heed of forgetting your former case! your former thoughts! your former convictions, and complaints, and covenants! God did not work all that upon your hearts to be forgotten; he intended not only your present change, but your after remembrance of it, for your close adhering to him while you live; and for your quickening and constant perseverance to the end. The forgetting of their former miseries, and the workings of God upon their hearts in their conversion, is a great cause of mutability and revolting, and of unspeakable hurt to many a soul.

Nay, may you not remember also what sorrow you had in the day of your repentance, for your forsaking and neglecting God so long? And will you grow again neglectful of him? Was it then so heinous a sin in your eyes? and is it now grown less? Could you then aggravate it so many ways, (and justly,) and now do you justify or extenuate it? Were you then ready to sink under the burden of it? and were so hardly persuaded that it would be forgiven you? and now do you make so small a matter of it? Did you then so much wonder at your folly, that could so long let out your thoughts and affections upon the creature, while you neglected God and heaven? and do you begin to look that way again? Do you now grow familiar with a life so like to that which was once your state of death? and bear that easily that once was the breaking of your heart? O Christians, turn not away from that God again, who once fetched you home, with so much smart and so much grace! with

such a twist of love and fatherly severity! Methinks, when you remember how you were once awakened, you should not easily fall asleep again. And when you remember the thoughts which then were in your hearts, and the tears that were in your eyes, and the earnest prayers which you then put up, that God would receive, and take you for his own, you should not now forget him, and live as if you could live without him. Remember, that so far as you withdraw your hearts from God, and let them follow inferior things, so far you contradict his works upon your hearts; so far you violate your covenant with him, or sin against it; so far you are revolters, and go against the principal part of your professed religion; yea, so far you are ungodly as you thus withdraw your hearts from God. Cleave to him, and prosecute your covenant, if you will have the saving benefits of his love and covenant.

3. Moreover, the servants of God are doubly obliged to walk with him, because they have had that experience of goodness, the safety and sweetness of it, which strangers have not. Do you not remember how glad you were, when you first believed that he pardoned and accepted you? and how much you rejoiced in his love and entertainment? and how much better you found your Father's house, than ever you had found your sinful state? and how much sweeter his service was, than you did before believe? It is like you can remember something like that which is described in Luke xv. 20—24. "And he arose, and came to his father: but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck,

and kissed him: and the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." What would you have thought or said of this prodigal, if, after all this, he should have been weary of his father's house and company, and have taken more pleasure in his former company? Would you not have said, He was a forgetful and unthankful wretch, and worthy never more to be received? I do not speak to you now as to apostates, that are turned ungodly, and have quite forsaken God and holiness; but I beseech you consider what it is, after such experiences and obligations as these, so much as to abate your love, and grow remiss, and mindless, and indifferent, as if you were weary of God, and were inclined to neglect him, and look again to the world for your hope, and satisfaction, and delight! As you love your souls, and as you would avoid the sorrows which are greater than any that ever you felt, take heed of slighting the love that hath done such wonders for you, and of dealing so unthankfully with the everlasting God, and of turning thus away from him that hath received you! Remember, whilst you live, the love of your espousals. Was God so good to you at first, and holiness so desirable? and is it not so still?

And I am sure that your own experience will bear witness, that since that time, in all your lives,

it never was so well with you as when you walked most faithfully with God. If you have received any falls and hurts, it hath been when you have straggled from him; if ever you had safety, peace, or joy, it hath been when you have been nearest to him: your wounds, and grief, and death, hath been the fruit of your own ways, and of your forsaking him: your recovery, and health, and life, have been the fruit of his ways, and of your adhering to him: many and many a time you have confessed this, and have said, It is good for me to draw near to God. He hath helped you when none else could help you; and comforted you, when none else could comfort you. How far are you above the worldling's happiness, when you are nigh to God! One lively thought of his greatness, and excellency, and of his love to you in Jesus Christ, will make the name of wealth, and honour, and favour, and preferment, and sensual pleasures, to seem to you as words of no signification. How indifferent will you be, as to your prosperity in the world, when you feel what it is to walk with God! If you are lively, experimental Christians, you have found this to be true: have you not found that it is the very health and ease, and proper employment of your souls to walk with God, and keep close to him? and that all goes well with you while you can do thus, however the world doth esteem or use you? and that when you grow strange or disobedient to God, and mindless of his goodness, his presence, and his authority, you are like the stomach that is sick, and like a bone that is out of joint, that can have no ease till it be healed, and restored to its proper place? No meats or drinks,

no company nor recreation, no wealth or greatness will serve to make a sick man well, or ease the dislocated bones. Nothing will serve a faithful, holy soul, but God; this is the cause of the dolour of his heart, and of the secret groans and complainings of his life, because in this life of distance and imperfection, he finds himself so far from God; and when he hath done all that he can, he is still so dark, and strange, and cold in his affections! When persecution driveth him from the ordinances and public worship, or when sin hath set him at a greater distance from his God, he bemoaneth his soul, as David in his banishment from the tabernacle: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" And it is no wonder, if with his greatest joy, he be yet clouded with these sorrows, because he yet wanteth more of God than he enjoyeth; and his enjoying graces (love and joy) are yet imperfect. But when he hath attained his nearest approach to God, he will have fulness of delight in fulness of fruition.

O Christians! do I need to tell you, that after all the trials you have made in the world, you have never found any state of life that was worthy your desires, nor that gave you any true content, but only this living upon God? If you have not found such comfort here as others have done, yet at least you have seen it afar off, within your reach; as men that in the Indies, in the discovery of plantations, expect

gold mines, when they find those golden sands that promise it. You have found a life which is certainly desirable, and leadeth to joy in the midst of sorrow; and it is no small joy to have a certain promise and prospect of everlasting joy. It is therefore more excusable in those that never tasted any better than the pleasures of the flesh, to neglect this sweeter heavenly life, than it is in you, that have been convinced by your own experience, that there is no life to be compared with it.

4. Your walking with God is the necessary prosecution of your choice and hopes of life eternal. It is your necessary preparation to your enjoying him in heaven. And have you fixed on those hopes with so great reason and deliberation, and will you now draw back and be slack in the prosecution of them? Have you gone so far in the way to heaven, and do you now begin to look behind you, as if you were about to change your mind? Paul setteth you a better example: "Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him —if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead: not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high

calling of God in Christ Jesus." He compareth himself to a runner in a race, that till he apprehend the prize or mark, doth still make forward with all his might, and will not so much as mind or look at any thing behind him, that would turn him back, or stop him in his course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us: we turned our backs upon them at our conversion, when we turned to God: it is these that would now call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections, when we should run on, and reach forward to the heavenly prize: it is God and heaven, and the remaining duties of a holy life, that are the things before us! And shall we now look back? what we, that are running and striving for a crown of endless glory! we that, if we lose it, do lose our souls and hopes for ever! we, that have loitered in the morning of our lives, and lost so much precious time as we have done! we, that have gone so far in our way, and held out through so many difficulties and assaults! shall we now grow weary of walking with God, and begin to look to the things behind us? Did he not tell us at the first, that father and mother, and house and land, and life, and all things must be forsaken for Christ, if we will be his disciples? These are the things behind us, which we turned our back on when we consented to the covenant; and are they now grown better? or is God grown worse, that we turn our hearts from him to them? When we first began our Christian race, it was upon supposition that it was for that immortal crown, which all the world is not to be compared to: and have we not still the same consideration before us, to move us to hold on till we attain it? Hold

on, Christians, it is for heaven: is there not enough in that word to drive back all the cares and pleasures that importune your minds to forget your God? is there not enough in that word to quicken you up in your greatest dulness? and to call you home, when you are wandering from God; and to make you again fall out with all that would reduce you, or divert you, and call it vanity and vexation of spirit? Methinks the forethought of that life and work which you hope to have with God for ever, should make you earnestly desire to have as much of the like on earth, as is here to be attained! If it will be your heaven and happiness then, it must needs be desirable now. It is not beseeming a man, that saith he is seeking for perfect communion with God in heaven, and that above all things, (as every Christian doth,) to live in a daily neglect or forgetfulness of God on earth. Delightfully to draw near him, and exercise all our faculties upon him, or for him, sometimes in prayer and contemplation on himself, and always in works of obedience to him; this is the life that beseemeth those that profess to seek eternal life. O therefore let us make it our daily work, to keep our God and glory in our eye, and to spur on our dull affections, and in the diligent attendance and following the Captain of our salvation, to prosecute our expected end.

5. Lastly, consider that God doth purposely provide you hard entertainment in the world, and cause every creature to deny you the pleasure and satisfaction which you desire, that so you may have none to walk with but himself, with any heart-settling comfort and content. If you see not enough in him

to allure you to himself, you shall feel enough in the world to drive you to him: if his love and goodness will not serve you alone to make him your pleasure, and hold you to him in the best and most excellent way (of love), at least the storms and troubles that are abroad, shall show you a necessity of keeping close to God; and the love of yourselves shall help you to do that, which was not done by the attraction of his love alone. If you will put him to it, and send out his command to every creature, to cross and vex you, and disappoint all expectations from it, that so he may force you to remember your father and your home, deny not then but it is long of yourselves that you were not saved in an easy way. Would you wish God to make that condition pleasant to you, which he seeth you take too much pleasure in already (or seek and desire it, at least)? when, as it is the pleasantness of the creature that is your danger, and which detaineth your thoughts and affections from himself? If you could but learn to walk with him, and to take up your pleasure in his love appearing to you in his creatures, and to make their sweetness a means to your apprehension of the sweetness of his favour, and of the everlasting joys, then you might say the creature doth you good; and then it is like you might be permitted to possess and use it for such pleasure. The jealous God will watch your hearts, though you watch them not; and he will make you know that he seeth which way they run out from him, and what creature it is that is minded and delighted in, while he is neglected, as if he were unsuitable, and scarce desirable. And you must never

look that he should long permit you those prohibited delights, or let you alone in those idolatrous inclinations. If he love you, he will cure that carnal love, and recover your love to himself that hath deserved it. If he intended not your salvation, he may let you go, and try again whether the creature will prove better to you than himself; but you cannot think, that he will thus let go his children that must live with him for ever. Have you not perceived that this is the design and meaning of his afflicting and disappointing providences? even to leave you no comfortable entertainment or converse, but with himself, and with his servants, and with those means that lead you to himself? If you begin to desire to lodge abroad in strange habitations, he will uncover those houses, and will not leave you a room that is dry to put your head in; or he will throw open the doors, and leave all open to the lust of ravenous beasts and robbers. He will have thy heart, and he will have thy company, because thou art his child, and because he loveth thee. He will allow thee neither thy carnal delights nor hopes. If he perceive thee either taking that pleasure in thy prosperity, which thou shouldst take in him alone, or hoping, at least, that the world may hereafter prove more amiable and delightful to thee; the more he loveth thee, the more his providence shall conspire with his grace to change thy mind, by depriving thee of thy unwholesome, dangerous delights, and of all thy hopes of such hereafter. Use the world as a traveller, for the ends to which it was ordained, to the service of God, and the furtherance of thy salvation, and then thou shalt find that God will

furnish thee with all that is necessary to these necessary ends; but if the world must have your love and care, and must be your chief business and delight, and your excuse for not attending upon God, murmur not, nor marvel not, if he dispose of it and you accordingly. If you are yet too healthful to think with seriousness on your eternal state; if you are too rich to part with all for Christ, or openly to own his cause; if you are too much esteemed in the world, to own a scorned, slandered religion; if you are so busy for earth, that you cannot have time to think of heaven; if you have so much delight in house or land, or in your employment, or recreations, or friends, that God and godliness can have little or none of your delight; marvel not then, if God do shake your health, or waste your riches, or turn your honour into contempt, and suffer men to slander and reproach you, and spit in your face, and make you of no reputation; marvel not if he turn you out of all, or turn all to your grief and trouble, and make the world a desert to you, and the inhabitants as wolves and bears. The great lesson that Christ hath undertaken to teach you, is the difference betwixt the Creator and the creature, and the difference betwixt heaven and earth. The great work that Christ hath undertaken to do upon you, is to recover your hearts from the world to God; and this lesson he will teach you, and this work he will do upon you, whatever it cost you; for it must be done. Yet is not the world unjust enough, or cruel, or vexatious enough to you, to teach you to come home, and take up your content and rest in God? It may then prove more cruel, and more vexatious

to you, till you have better learned this necessary lesson. Yet is not your condition empty enough of carnal delusory pleasures, to wean you from the world, and make you look to surer things? Yet are you keeping up your worldly hopes, that the world will again prove better to you, and that you shall have happy days hereafter? It seems you are not yet brought low enough: you must yet take another purge, and perhaps a sharper than you took before: you must have more blood-letting, till your delirium cease, and your feverish thirst after creature comforts abate. It is sad that we should be so foolish and unkind, as to stay from God, as long as any preferments, or pleasures, or profits, in the world will entertain us; but seeing it is so, let us be thankful both to that grace and that Providence which cureth us. If you perceive it not better to dwell with God, than with a flattering, prospering world, he will try whether you can think it better to dwell with God, than with a malicious, cruel, persecuting world; and whether it be better to have your hearts in heaven, than in poverty, prison, banishment, or reproach. If you find it not better to converse with God, than with those that honour you, please you, or prefer you; he will try whether you can think it better to converse with him, than with those that hate, revile, belie, and persecute you. And are these the wise and wholesome methods of our great Physician? And shall we not rather be ruled by him, than by our brutish appetites? and think better of his counsels, than of the blind concupiscence of the flesh? Let this be the issue of all our sufferings, and all the cruelties and

injuries of the world, to drive us home to converse with God, and to turn our desires, and labours, and expectations, to the true felicity that never will forsake us; and then, the will of the Lord be done! Let him choose his means, if this may be the end; let us kiss the rod, and not revile it, if this may be the fruit of his corrections. Who will not pray that God would deny us those contents, which keep us from seeking our content in him? And that he would deny us all those hurtful pleasures which hinder us from pleasing him, or from making him and his ways our chiefest pleasure? and that he would permit us no such creature-converse, as hindereth our converse with him? It is best living there (be it in prison or at liberty) where we may live best to God. Come home, O suffering Christian, to thy God! take up thy content and rest in him; be satisfied with him as thy portion; and remember where it is that he is to be fully and perpetually enjoyed; and then it is good for thee that thou wast afflicted; for all thy sufferings have their end.

CONVERSE WITH GOD

IN SOLITUDE.

BY

RICHARD BAXTER.

PREFACE.

If multitudes, who glory in their Christian name, were not willingly without God in the world, there would not every where be found such melancholy proofs of aversion to sacred retirement. Every moment of time, and every capacity of nature, would not so studiously be consecrated to the low caresses of fellow-worms. Nor would the natural, the unavoidable, and therefore common disappointments resulting from mortal friendship, be received with such horrible surprise, or be felt with such exquisite pain: like the man that cried out when his idols of silver and gold were stolen from him, "They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?"

Mr. Henry observes, where it is said of our Lord, He went up into a mountain apart to pray, "They are not Christ's followers, that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy, but God and their own hearts."

O that all hearts may be so visited with the grace and Spirit of Jesus, as in this instance to make it their highest ambition to breathe his temper, and

imitate his example! Then the multitudes, who have so long and ardently sought their heaven in vain, amongst the tumults of business or the thoughtless circles of mirth and gaiety, will seek and find it in the recesses of devout retirement. Then will the flames of devotion, wherever they are now ascending, ascend yet higher, burn more constant, pure, and fervent, and produce more lively foretastes of heavenly joy.—That this small, but heavenly tract, may, through a Divine blessing, contribute to answer such desirable purposes, is the sole end of its appearance in the present form.

B. F.

CONVERSE WITH GOD

IN SOLITUDE.

JOHN XVI. 32.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

CHAP. I.

Friends forsaking us in our distresses.

1. CHRIST thought fit to foretel his disciples, how they would manifest their infirmity in forsaking him. This he did, more fully to convince them, that "he knew what was in man," and that he voluntarily submitted to his being forsaken. Thus man did least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for man; even making atonement for man's reconciliation to God, and preparing the most effectual and expensive remedy for man's recovery. Christ foretold them of the consequence of their infirmity, to humble them, that they might not think

too highly of themselves for having so freely confessed to him; "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God." Immediately "Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Though Christ would have his servants know his graces in them, he would also have them know their own corruptions and infirmities. We are apt to judge of what we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at present. When we feel the stirring of some corruption, we are ready to think ourselves destitute of the contrary grace; and when we feel the exercise of faith, or love, we are ready to think we shall never more feel the contrary corruptions. But Christ would keep us both humble and watchful, by acquainting us with the mutability and inconstancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget the time is coming "when it may go worse." We may say to ourselves, as Christ to his disciples, "Do we now believe?" It is well. But the time may be coming, in which we may be shaken by our remaining unbelief.—Do we now rejoice in the love of God? The time may be coming, when we may think ourselves forsaken of God, and that he treats us as enemies.—Do we now pray with fervour? The time may come, when we shall seem to ourselves to be prayerless; or, at least, to pray in vain. What Christ here prophesied of his disciples, exactly came to pass. In the garden, when he was sweating blood

in prayer, they were sleeping. Though "the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak." They "could not watch with him one hour." When he was apprehended, "then all his disciples forsook him, and fled."

2. In the text there are three things that deserve our distinct consideration.

1. Christ was forsaken by his own disciples, and left alone.

2. When the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own.—They returned to their old habitations, acquaintance, and employments, as if their hopes and hearts had been almost broken, and all their labour lost in following Christ so long. Yet the root of faith and love, which still remained, caused them to inquire farther of the issue, and to meet together in secret to converse with each other about these things.

3. When Christ was forsaken of his disciples, and left alone, yet he was not forsaken of his Father, nor so left alone as to be separated from him, or from his love.

Each of these leading sentiments of the text will be more particularly illustrated, while in this chapter we consider the case of friends forsaking us in our distress; and (Chap. 2.) of friends taken from us by death: then (Chap. 3.) what it is to have the presence of God with us in solitude; and (Chap. 4.) why the presence of God in solitude is desirable. To which some concluding directions will be added, (Chap. 5.) to show how the presence of God in solitude is attainable.—The case of friends forsaking us in our distress, makes it proper to inquire,—Why Christ

suffered all his disciples to forsake him;—how we may see ourselves forsaken by our friends;—and what an aggravated affliction it is to be so forsaken;—besides offering some considerations to reconcile us to such an aggravated affliction.

3. It may seem strange to us, that Christ would suffer all his disciples to forsake him in his extremity.—And, I doubt not, it will seem strange to us, when in our extremity, and even in our sufferings for Christ, we shall find ourselves forsaken by those we highly valued, and with whom we were most intimate. Providence may permit this, for such reasons as these:—

Christ, while suffering for sin, permitted the power and odiousness of sin to break forth, that it might be known he suffered not in vain.—He permitted his followers to desert him, and thereby discover their secret unbelief, selfishness, and unthankfulness, that they might know the death of Christ was as necessary for them, as for others; that the disease was universal, and therefore needed a universal remedy. It is not Christ's intent to make his servants seem better than they are, either to themselves or others; or, to honour himself by his hiding their faults; but to magnify his pardoning and healing grace, by means of those sins which he pardons and heals.

Hereby he brings his followers to the fuller knowledge of themselves.—He shows them that which ought all their days to keep them humble, and watchful, and at a distance from presumption and self-confidence. When we have confessed Christ, or done him any considerable service, we are

apt, with the disciples, to say, " Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" As if they had rather been givers to Christ, than receivers from him. But when Peter forswears him, and the rest fly from him, and afterwards reflect on their ingratitude and cowardice; then they better discern ther weakness, and where their dependence ought to be.

He also, by this means, teaches them what they would have been, if God had totally left them to themselves.—When our faults have hurt us, and made us ashamed, we shall be thankful for recovering grace, and not boast, as if we had " made ourselves to differ from others."

Our Lord might also design to have no support from man in his sufferings.—It was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from those few that lately were his faithful servants. Thus no man could challenge to himself the honour of contributing in any degree to the redemption of the world; no, not so much as by encouraging the Redeemer. In this way Christ might render the witness of his disciples to him of greater authority.—When all their doubts were dissipated, they would be received, as the most impartial witnesses, by a doubting world. And thus Christ would also teach us, that the best of men are not entirely to be trusted.—Paul lived in a time when Christians were more self-denying and steadfast than they now are; yet he says, " At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me."

4. Christians, expect to be conformed to your

Lord in this part of your humiliation.—Are your friends yet friendly to you? Do not promise yourselves an unchanging constancy in them. Are they yet useful to you? Expect the time when they cannot help you. Are they your comforters, and is their company your delight? Be ready for the time, when they may become your sharpest scourges and heart-piercing griefs; at least, "when you shall say, We have no pleasure in them." Have any, or all of them, already failed you? What wonder? Are they not men, and sinners? Reprove yourselves, for your unwarrantable expectations, and learn to know what man is.

Expect some of your friends, whom you have thought sincere, to prove very unfaithful.—Are you better than David, who had an Ahithophel? Or than Paul, who had a Demas? Or than Christ, who had a Judas? "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." If pride, vain-glory, and sensuality are unmortified, such persons are not to be trusted. For wealth, honour, or worldly interest, they will part with God and salvation; and much more with their best friends on earth. With Job, you may have occasion to complain, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer. I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of my own body. Yea, young children

despised me: I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me." You may be obliged, as well as David, to say, "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." Those that have been most acquainted with the secrets of your soul may be your betrayers. They, whom you have laid under the strongest obligations, may prove your most inveterate enemies. Many faithful ministers of Christ have preached, and prayed, and wept for their people's souls; and after all have been reproached and persecuted. Like the patient, that, being cured of a mortal disease, sued his physician at law, for making him sick with medicines. Paul was accounted an enemy by the Galatians, because he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth makes the faithfulest preachers most ungrateful. "I heard the defaming of many," says Jeremiah; "fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him." Thus must the servants of Christ be used, in conformity to their suffering Head.

5. Some that are sincere, and whose hearts are with you, may by temptation be drawn to disown you. —When malice is slandering you, timorous friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to take your part. If Peter's fear can deny his suffering Lord, wonder not that faint-hearted friends disown us, who gave them too much occasion to do so. Why may

not we be obliged to say, as David did, " My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off."

Many things may occasion sincere friends to fall out.—Paul and Barnabas may grow so hot as to separate from each other. Easily can Satan, if permitted, set the tinder on fire, which he finds in the gentlest dispositions. There are no friends so near and dear, whom the infirmities of passion may not either alienate from, or render an affliction to, each other.

Clashing interests may very much interrupt friendship.—See this in the contentions of Abraham and Lot; of Isaac and Ishmael; of Jacob and Esau; of Laban and Jacob; of Leah and Rachel; of Joseph and his brethren; of Saul and David; and Zibah, Mephibosheth, and David; with many others. It is rare to meet with a Jonathan, that will affectionately love unto death the man who is appointed to deprive him of a kingdom. He that can say, ' I suffer by another;' or, ' I am a loser by him;' thinks he has a license for his unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratify the thoughts of the covetous, ambitious and selfish, or so cure their distempered minds, as to fill them with perfect charity, then all the world will be your friends.

The same may be said of difference in opinions. —If your friend is proud, it is wonderful how he will slight you, and withdraw his love, because you are not of his mind. If he be zealous, he is easily tempted to think it a part of his duty to God to disown you, or grow negligent of your friendship; because your differing from him is, as he thinks, either

an evidence of your neglecting God, or of your contradicting the truth of God. When all your friends have the same intellectual complexion and temperature, and their understanding is of the same size with your own, then you may hope for an uninterrupted friendship.

Some of your friends may, in their own apprehensions, get above you in wisdom, wealth, or honour.—Upon this, you will grow unsuitable to them. They will pity your weakness, in not seeing the truth which is so clear to their eye; or your simplicity, for hindering your own preferment; and therefore will converse for the future with those of their own distinguished rank.

Some will think they have now discovered your foibles.—And indeed our defects are so many, and our infirmities so great, that the more men know us, the more we deserve their pity or reproof. But this will not excuse that neglect of friendship and virtue, which is owing to the pride of those who probably overlook much greater failings in themselves.

Some are so changeable, that the same friends will not please them long.—Their love is a flower that quickly withers. Novelty must feed their slippery affections. Perhaps they think they have got better friends.—Either they have met with those that are more suitable, or that may be more useful, as having more learning, wealth, or power. Some may think it is their duty to be shy of you under sufferings.—Though they must not desert Christ, they think for their own preservation they may forsake a fellow-mortal. But they forget their Lord's

interesting declaration: " Inasmuch as ye did it," or did it not, " to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it," or did it not, " to me."

6. Some of your friends, to cover their own unfaithfulness, will plead that they forsake you for your faults.—Thus, by pretending zeal for God, they make a duty of their sin. There are few crimes in the world, that are not hypocritically called by names of piety and virtue.

Some may really mistake your case, and think you suffer as evil-doers.—So when God had taken away Job's children, riches, and health, his friends would take away the reputation and comfort of his integrity; and, under pretence of bringing him to repentance, they charge him with what he was never guilty of. Censorious, false-accusing friends, cut deeper than malicious, slandering enemies. Even your most self-denying acts of obedience to God, may be so misunderstood by your real friends, as to be turned to your rebuke; like David's " dancing before the ark." Thus friends may do the work of enemies, yea, of Satan himself, " the accuser of the brethren;" and may wrong you much more than open adversaries could have done. But suppose you are chargeable with some real crime; in that case, to expect your friend should befriend your sins, or behave to you as if you were innocent, would but show your ignorance of the nature and usefulness of true friendship, and that there is too much friendship yet subsisting between you and your sins.

Even the friends that are most faithful to you may be utterly incapable of affording you any real service.—The greatest and best of men are but

" miserable comforters." They may mourn over your sicknesses and pains, without any tendency to heal or ease them. Their ignorance may increase your misery, by attempting your relief. They may exasperate your oppressors, while they think to speak that which may set you free from oppression. Their friendly mistakes may resemble Peter's, when he gave that carnal counsel to his Lord, " Be it far from thee, Lord; this *suffering* shall not be unto thee." Also when he rashly drew his sword against the officers that came to apprehend Jesus. Love and good meaning will not prevent the mischiefs of ignorance and error. Your best friends may not only be unable to relieve you, but their suffering may greatly add to your grief.—While your troubles become theirs, theirs will become yours, and your own stock of sorrows be thereby increased.

And though your friends are both sincere and serviceable, yet they must continue with you but a little while.—Perhaps God will take away your dearest friends, and leave you in the midst of many enemies. If you have but one, perhaps God will separate that one from you, either by death, or in some remote situation. " The godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men."

7. To be forsaken of our friends, in such circumstances as have been mentioned, is a greatly aggravated affliction. They usually forsake us in our greatest sufferings and straits, when we have the greatest need of them; especially at a dying hour, when all other worldly comforts fail. As we must leave our houses, lands, and wealth, so must we, for the present, leave our friends. Often they fail us,

when we are most faithful in our duty. And perhaps they are persons of whom we deserved best, and from whom we might have expected most. Which of us must not say with David, "All men are liars;" that is, deceitful, either through unfaithfulness or insufficiency; that either will forsake us, or cannot help us in time of need.

8. In order to reconcile our minds to such an aggravated affliction, let us attend to the following considerations:—

Consider how this affliction sets the creature at a due distance from the Creator. All-sufficiency, immutability, and perfect faithfulness, are proper to Jehovah. Glorious as the sun is, we wonder not at its setting, or being eclipsed; and why should we wonder to have a friend, a pious friend, fail us for a time, and in the hour of our distress? Some friends will not, but all may, if God leave them to their own weakness. Man is not your rock. He has no stability, but what is derived, dependant, and uncertain. Learn, therefore, to rest on God alone, and lean not too confidently on any mortal.

Consider what a useful discovery this affliction makes of the common infirmity of man.—If any of God's servants live in constant holiness, without any stumbling in their way, it tempts some self-accusing soul to think itself altogether graceless. But when we read of Peter's cursing and swearing that he knew not Jesus; and how he and Barnabas were carried away with dissimulation; and of David's unkindness to Mephibosheth, the seed of Jonathan; and of his vile treachery to Uriah, a faithful and deserving subject; we are less offended at the un-

faithfulness of our friends, and are taught to compassionate their frailty; and also are not so hopeless, when we ourselves have failed God or man.

Consider how this affliction manifests the meanness and carnality of our self-love.—We should not discern this sin in its root, if we did not see and taste it in its fruits. When you have tasted the fruits of your friends' remaining worldliness, selfishness, and carnal fears; then you will better know the odiousness of these vices, which thus break through all obligations to God and you, in a direct contradiction to the light of conscience, and the operations of divine grace.

9. Consider this affliction as a good remedy against over-loving your friends.—In loving God, we are in no danger of excess, and therefore have no need of any thing to quench it. In loving saints as saints, and purely for Christ's sake, we are not apt to exceed. Yet our understanding may mistake, by thinking saints have more holiness than they really have; and we are very apt to mix a selfish love with that which is holy; and not merely to love a Christian as a Christian, but to over-love him, because he is our friend. The Christian that has no special love to us, we are apt to under-value; but one that entirely loves us, we love above his proper worth. And if we love any, more for loving us, than for loving Christ, no wonder we are thus afflicted, to cure us of our selfish love. O how highly do we think of their judgments, graces, and conduct, that highly esteem us; when greater excellencies in another are scarcely observed! If we exalt our friends too high in our esteem, it is a sign that God must

cast them down. As their love to us was the snare, so their unkindness and unfaithfulness to us is the fittest remedy. God is very jealous of our hearts, while they inordinately love and value any of his creatures, and will rebuke our excess; though the opposite extreme is also odious, to be void of natural, friendly, or social affections. God cannot take it well to see us dote upon dust and frailty like ourselves, at the same time that all his attractive goodness causes such languid love to him, that we ourselves can scarcely feel it. If therefore he cures us, by permitting our friends to show us how little they deserve such excessive love, when God himself has so little of our love; it is because he is so tender of his own glory, and merciful to his servants' souls.

Consider also how this affliction leads us to observe and honour the wonderful patience of God.—When our friends forsake us in our distress, especially if we suffer for Christ, it is God they injure more than us; and if He bear with them, and forgive them upon repentance, why should we not do so, who are much less injured? The vile ingratitude of sinners should make us reflect. How great and wonderful is the patience of God, which bears with those that abuse him, to whom they are infinitely obliged! And how great is that mercy, which hath borne with, and pardoned greater wrongs done by myself to God, than men have ever done to me! When David remembered his sin, by which God was provoked to raise up that son against him, of whom he had been too fond, it made him easily bear the curses and reproaches of Shimei. It will make us bear abuse from others, to remember how ill we

have behaved towards God, and consequently how ill we have deserved at his hands.

10. Consider how this affliction puts us upon our guard, that the love of our friends may not hinder us, when we are called to suffer or die.—When we overlove them, it tears our hearts to leave them, and strongly tempts us to betray the cause of Christ. It is so hard a thing to be willing to die, that it is a mercy to have any thing removed, that makes us unwilling. The excessive love of friends is not the least of those impediments. O how loath is many a one to die, when they think of parting with wife, or husband, or children, or other dear friends! And if any unkindness happens to arise between such friends, then we are ready to say, 'It is time to leave the world, when my dearest friends thus forsake me!' This helps us to remember our dearest everlasting Friend, and to grieve that we have been no truer to him, who would not have forsaken us in our extremity. Sometimes it makes us so weary of the world, that with Elijah, we say, "Now, O Lord, take away my life." Thus the unkindness of friends is a greater help to loosen us from the world, and often proves a great mercy to a departing soul; and indeed fortifies us against other temptations arising from friendship. When an intimate friend has grown strange, and soon after turned away from every appearance of serious religion, I have known others convinced thereby of the mercy of God, in making their friends' desertion the means of their own preservation. When husbands have done this, and at the same time have behaved inhumanly to their wives, I have often observed how the poor

women have been kept from following them in their apostacy; into which other women have been drawn, whose husbands behaved more kindly. Therefore I must still say, we were undone, if we had the disposing of ourselves. We should never be willing to have our friends forsake us; yet God has thereby kept many souls from being undone for ever.

Once more; consider that our having too much comfort in any creature is very unsuitable to our present state.—The work of mortification much consists in having our enjoyments so far annihilated, that they may have no power to draw our hearts from God, or detain us from our duty. And the more excellent and lovely any enjoyment appears to us, the less it is dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder and ensnare us.

11. If you seriously consider these things, you will admire the wisdom of God in leaving you under this kind of trial, in weaning you from every created enjoyment, and teaching you by his providence, as well as by his words, to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" You will not wonder, that they who live in other sins, should be guilty of this unfaithfulness to friends. Their obligations to you are nothing in comparison with their great and manifold obligations to God. You know you have more injured God yourselves, than any man ever injured you; and if God bear with you, have you not great reason to bear with others? Are you not more prone to aggravate the wrong which others do to you, than that which you do to them? Nay, you have been much more injurious to yourselves, than

ever others have been to you. Near as you are to yourselves, yet all your enemies on earth, or in hell, have not done you half the hurt that you have done to yourselves. 'Have I forfeited my own salvation, and deserved everlasting wrath, and sold myself and my Saviour for so base a thing as sinful pleasure; and shall I ever wonder that another man does me some temporal hurt? Was my friend so near, or so much obliged to me, as myself? O sinful soul, let thy own, rather than thy friend's treachery and neglects be the matter of thy wonder, thy displeasure, and complaint! And let thy conformity to Jesus Christ, be thy holy ambition and delight; not as thy suffering, nor as it is caused by men's sin; but as it is thy fellowship in the sufferings of thy Lord, and caused by his love.' Our conformity to, and fellowship with, Christ in his sufferings, in any remarkable degree, is the lot of his best servants, and the highest of their attainments in the present state; and is therefore neither to be expected with dread, nor borne with impatience, but with holy joy. And if it be so with sufferings for Christ in general, it must be so with this particular sort of suffering; even, to be forsaken of our nearest and dearest friends, when we are most abused by our enemies.

CHAP. II.

Friends taken from us by Death.

1. We are next to consider, why the disciples forsook their Lord, and what they had recourse to

when they left him.—The text says, "Ye shall be scattered every man to his own." Self-denial was not perfect in them, and therefore selfishness prevailed in the hour of temptation. They had before forsaken all for Christ. They had left parents and families, estates and trades, to be his disciples. But though they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamed of a visible kingdom, and were animated by carnal expectations of being great men upon earth, under Christ as a temporal prince. And therefore when they saw him in the hands of his enemies, under the most ignominious treatment, they concluded that their hopes were now disappointed, and in their sudden fright seemed to repent their having followed him. They now began to think that they had lives of their own to save, and families of their own to mind, and business of their own to do. They that had forsook their private interests and affairs, and were gathered together for the sake of living in communion with Jesus Christ and one another, now return to their particular callings, "and are scattered every man to his own."

2. Selfishness is the great enemy of all societies, of all fidelity and friendship.—There is no trusting any person in whom self is predominant. And where it does not reign, the remainders of it make men walk uneven and unsteadily, both towards God and each other. They will certainly deny God and their friends, in a time of trial, who are not able to deny themselves. Or rather, he that is prevailingly selfish, was never a real friend to any. He has always some interest of his own, which his friends must needs contradict, or are insufficient to satisfy.

His houses, lands, or money, his children, reputation, or something which he calls his own, will frequently be the matter of contention; and for the sake of these things, which are so near to him, he will cast off his nearest friend. Contract no special friendship with a selfish man. Put no confidence in him, whatever friendship he may profess. He is so confined to himself, that he has no true love to spare for others. If he seem to love a friend, it is not as a friend, but as a servant, or at best as a benefactor. He loves you for himself, as he loves his money, his horse, or house; because you may be serviceable to him. When you have no more capacity to serve him, he has no more love for you.

3. Here it may be proper to offer some advice to such as are lamenting the death of their dearest friends; and doubting whether heaven itself will renew such friendship, or so much as need it; or, if such friendship be renewed in heaven, whether the enjoyment of it will be so much the more endearing.

4. They that are lamenting the death of their dearest friends, may find some relief from the following considerations.—Let it be granted, that you mourn the loss, not of a false friend, but of one of the most sincere, faithful, and intimate. Consider,

Who deprived you of your friend?—Was it not God? Did not he that gave him to you, take him from you? Did not his Lord and Owner call him home? Can God do any thing unjust? May he not do what he pleases with his own? Was there any defect of wisdom or goodness, of justice or mercy, in God's disposal of your friend? Or will you ever have rest, but in submitting to the Divine

good pleasure? If your friend had lived as long as you would have had him, you know not what sin he might have fallen into.—God could indeed have preserved him from sin; but he preserves in the use of means; and sometimes sees that death is the best means for preservation. Had God permitted your friend to have fallen into some scandalous sin, might it not have been much worse than death to him and you? So faithful a friend might have been shaken like Peter, and have denied his Lord; and thereby have appeared as odious in your eyes, as he had ever been amiable.

You know not what unkindness to yourself, your dearest friend might have been guilty of.—Alas! there is greater frailty and inconstancy in man than you are aware of. How often have the hearts of parents been broken by undutiful children, whom, in infancy, they would much more easily have followed to the grave! Which of us see not reason to distrust ourselves? And why should we promise ourselves more from another than from ourselves?

Had your friend lived longer, you know not what great calamity might have befallen him.—When the righteous seem to perish, and merciful men are taken away, they are taken away from the evil to come. How many deaths have I lamented, as unseasonable in my view; but Providence has soon taught me, that their longer life would have increased their misery! If your friend had survived, what comfort would he have found on earth in seeing and hearing such sins as vexed a righteous Lot from day to day; and perhaps himself at the same time under personal afflictions, temptations, and reproaches?

What was the world to your friend, while he did enjoy it?—Was it not a place of toil and trouble, of envy and vexation, of enmity and poison; of successive cares, and fears, and griefs; and especially of sin? Did he groan under the burden of a sinful nature; of a distempered, tempted, troubled heart; of languishings and weakness in every grace; of the rebukes of God, the wounds of conscience, and the malice of a wicked world? Did you not often join in prayer with him, to obtain deliverance from every burden; and will you now grieve that he has received the answer of prayer? Is the world a place of rest, or of trouble to yourself; and would you have your friend also to be as far from rest? If your present circumstances are at all easy and peaceful, you little know what storms are near; or how soon you may see the days, hear the tidings, feel the pains, and bear the burdens, which may oblige you to desire death, and confess that a life on earth is no felicity.

5. Do you think it is for the hurt or good of your friend that he is removed from hence?—It cannot be for his hurt, unless he be in hell. And if he be in hell, he was no fit person for you to take much pleasure in upon earth. He might have been a fit object of your compassion, but not of your complacency. How can you be undone for want of such company as God will not endure in his sight? And if your friend is in heaven, you should regard his good, as well as your own, and not wish him from thence. If love teaches us to "mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice;" can it be an act of rational love to mourn for them that are possessed of the highest everlasting joys?

6. God will not honour himself merely by one servant, but by many.—God best knows when his work is done. When our friends have finished what God intended them to do, is it not time for them to begone, and for others to take their places? God will have a succession of his servants in the world. If David had not died, there had been no Solomon, nor Jehoshaphat, nor Hezekiah, nor Josiah, to honour God in the same throne.

You must not have all your mercies conveyed to you merely by one instrument.—God will not have you confine your love only to one of his servants. Therefore when one has done his part for your welfare, God will send you other mercies by another hand; and it is fit He should choose the messenger who bestows the gift. If you resolve to have all your mercies in one channel, or refuse to have any more mercies, your case deserves not compassion, but correction.

Does your esteem for your friend centre in him, in yourself, or in God?—If in God, why are you troubled to have God dispose of him according to his unerring wisdom? If in your friend; he is now made perfect, and therefore more lovely, and more fit for your joyful complacency. If in yourself only; it is just in God to take him from you, to teach you to prefer God before yourself, and to know better the nature of true friendship, and that your own felicity absolutely depends upon God alone.

7. Did you get good by your friend while he was with you?—If you only loved him, and made but little use of him for your spiritual profit, God in justice took him from you. Your friend was given

you, as your candle, to work by the light of it; as your raiment, to wear it; as your food, to feed upon it. Did you receive his counsel, and hearken to his reproofs, and pray and converse with him, so as to elevate your thoughts to God, and inflame your breast with sacred love?

8. And are you not too forgetful where you yourself now are, and where you must shortly be for ever?—Where would you have your friend, but where you must be yourself? If he had stayed here a thousand years, how little of that time could you have had of his company? When you are almost leaving the world yourself, would you not send your treasure before you? How soon shall you go from hence to God, where you shall find your friend, whom you lamented as if he had been lost, and there shall dwell with him for ever? O foolish mourner! would you not have your friend at home; at his home and yours; with "his Father and your Father, his God and your God?" Can you miss him so much for a day, when you have the prospect of living with him to all eternity!

9. Notwithstanding what has been suggested, some may doubt whether heaven itself will renew the friendship they have lost.—To scatter such a distressing apprehension, let the following reasons, for expecting your friendship to revive again in heaven, be attended to.

You cannot justly think that the knowledge of glorified saints shall be more imperfect, than their knowledge was while they were upon earth. We shall know much more, but not less than before. Heaven exceeds earth in knowledge, as much as it

does in joy. The angels in heaven have now a distinct knowledge of the least believers on earth, and rejoice in their conversion, and are styled by Christ, "their angels." Therefore when we shall be equal to the angels, we shall certainly know our nearest friends, who will have their share with us in that glory. Abraham knew the rich man in hell, and the rich man knew Abraham and Lazarus: therefore we shall have as distinct a knowledge. The two disciples knew Moses and Elijah in the mount, whom they had never seen before: much more shall we be made to know the saints in heaven. Our present knowledge shall be done away in heaven, only in regard to its imperfection: or, when that which is perfect is come: just as we put away childish things, when we become men. The change is from seeing through a glass, to seeing face to face; and from knowing in part, to knowing even as we also are known.

10. And though God be all in all in heaven, yet we shall there, not only know, but love and rejoice in fellow-creatures. For Christ, in his glorified human nature, is a creature; and as such, will no doubt be known and loved by all his members, without any diminution of the glory of his Divine nature. The several members of the body of Christ will, in heaven, be so nearly related to each other, that they must know and love each other, and not be unconcerned in each other's felicity. The future triumphant state of the church is often described in Scripture, as a kingdom, the city of God, the new Jerusalem; each of which implies a society. The saints themselves are called kings; and it is said of

them, that they "shall judge the world, and shall judge angels;" they must therefore have a distinct knowledge of the persons and things which are to be subjected to their judgment. As one part of the saints' happiness, they are to "come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:" and therefore shall not only know those great patriarchs, but shall take peculiar delight in their presence and converse. Besides, love to saints, as well as to God, is a grace that never faileth.

11. God can make use of glorified creatures, in subordination to himself, so as to be no diminution to his own all-sufficiency. Nor must we conceive of heaven itself, as if it had no use for fellow-creatures, nor any comfort in them. Though "flesh and blood shall not enter into that kingdom," but our bodies shall be spiritual, yet at the resurrection God shall give to every soul "its own body," and a body distinct from the soul: which must therefore have a felicity suited to a glorified body. And though it is said of knowing Christ after the flesh, "now henceforth know we him no more," it can only mean, that a carnal knowledge shall be turned into a spiritual. Thus the excellency of our knowledge of Christ in heaven, resembles the glory of our heavenly bodies, which shall be made to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father."

12. And if any should still doubt, whether the friendship that is renewed in heaven will be so much the more endearing, let such take the following answer.

If you should have all your happiness immediately

and solely in God, you will sustain no loss.—Or, if you should have as much happiness in other friends, whom you never knew before, that will not diminish your enjoyment of your former friends.—But most probably your love to glorified saints will distinctly regard them, both for their holiness, and for their relation to you. As holiness is the chief excellence, no doubt you will love those most, that will have most of God and glory, though you never knew them upon earth. And amongst those, whom you knew upon earth, you will certainly love them best whom God made use of for your greatest good, and who were the instruments of your conversion and salvation. It is manifest that our benefactors shall have our peculiar regard in heaven; because we shall there for ever remember, love, and praise, "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God." And, therefore, we shall also remember others with love and thankfulness, in just subordination to Christ, and in proportion as they were our friends for Jesus' sake.

13. The never-failing nature of love is a principal motive to kindle and increase it. Thus God draws us to every holy duty, by showing us the excellency of that duty; and it is no small excellency to say, that it "never fails." They, therefore, that think they shall have no personal knowledge of each other, nor personal love to each other, in heaven, take the most effectual course to destroy in their souls all holy love to those "especially that are of the household of faith." I am not able to love much, where I foresee I am not to love long. I cannot love

an inn so well as my own house; because I am sooner to leave it. I must love my Bible better than books of law, or physic; because it leads to eternity. I must love holiness in myself and others, better than food and raiment, or riches and honours, or beauty and pleasures; because that must be loved for ever; while the love of these is as transitory as the things themselves.

I must confess, as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them, after this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them as such, at the same time allowing for the excellent nature of grace. But I now delightfully converse with my godly friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them for ever; and I take comfort in those of them that are dead or absent, as believing I shall shortly meet them in heaven; and love them, I hope, with a heavenly love, as the heirs of heaven, even with a love that shall there be perfected, and more fully and for ever exercised.

CHAP. III.

The Presence of God with us in Solitude.

1. To the reasons already assigned for bearing the loss of friends, this may be added; that it gives us the loudest call to retire from all the world, and

to converse with God himself, and affords us some assistance in such divine converse. But this brings us to the third part of the text, where our Lord says, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."—He that is with the King is not alone, though forsaken by all others. He on whom the sun shines is not without light, though all his candles are put out. If God be our God, he is our all. And if God be our all, we shall not, while he is with us, find the want of creatures. For,

He is with us, who is every where, and therefore is never from us.

He is with us, who is almighty, and therefore we need not fear what man can do unto us. He can deliver us, when and how he pleases, from every danger and distress.

He is with us, who is infinitely wise, to preserve us even from our own folly, as well as from our enemy's subtilty. He knows what to do with us, in what paths to lead us, and what condition is best for us.

He is with us, who is infinitely good; alone fit to be the perpetual delight of our souls. There is nothing in him to disaffect or discourage us. We may love him, without fear of over-loving.

He is with us, who is intimately related to us. He most dearly loves, and will never withhold any thing from us that is for our real good.

2. This is he that is with us, when all have left us. But as to the manner how he is with us, let us more particularly observe. He is with us, by his gracious fatherly presence; sufficiently to do us good; and entertain us with his holy converse.

3. God is with us by his gracious fatherly presence. And not merely as he is every where, by his essential presence: we are in his family, attending on him, "as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters." As his children, "we are ever with him, and all that he hath is ours;" that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us. "When we awake," we should "still be with him." When we go abroad, we should behave as "always before him." Our life and works should be a "walking with God."

4. God is always with us, sufficiently to do us good.—Though we have none else to care for us; yet he will never cast us out of his care, but bids us cast all our care upon him, and promises that he will care for us. Though we have none else to provide for us, "our heavenly Father knoweth all the things we need," and will make the best provision. Though we have none else to defend us, he is our "sure defence;" the rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built. He gathers us to himself, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." And while love is thus protecting us, we may well say, "the Father is with us." Though we have none else to support us when we are weak; yet "his grace is sufficient for us; for his strength is made perfect in weakness." Though we have none to teach us, and resolve our doubts; yet the Master of assemblies is with us, and "will guide us into all truth." Though we have none else to comfort us in darkness and distress; yet, like Hagar in the wilderness, we shall have reason to say, "Thou God seest us." Though all our friends,

like Job's, turn our enemies, and add affliction to our affliction; yet he says, " hitherto shall he come, but no further, and here shall your proud waves be stayed." Though we say with David, " We looked on our right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know us; refuge failed us; no man cared for our souls;" yet we may add, as he does, " O Lord, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." Though, like David, we also complain, " Our enemies speak evil of us, whisper together against us, and desire our hurt;" yet we may share his consolation, and say, " Thou, Lord, upholdest us in our integrity, and settest us before thy face for ever." Though friends be far off: yet " the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."— Thus God is with us, when men are against us, or far from us. His people find by happy experience, that they are not alone. " His hand is with them to keep them from evil, that it may not grieve them, but work together for their good." He is " their hiding-place, to preserve them from trouble; surely the floods of great waters shall not come nigh unto them; he shall compass them about with songs of deliverance."

5. God is also with us, to entertain us with his holy converse.—Wherever our friends are, God is still at hand to be the most profitable, honourable, and delightful subject of our meditations. There is enough in him to employ all the faculties of our souls. A person, in a well furnished library, or indeed in the various volume of the visible creation, may excellently engage his thoughts for many years

together; but all would be nothing, unless God was the sense of books and creatures, and the substance of all these noble studies. He that is alone, and has only God himself to study, need never want matter for his meditation. Nor need he want matter for discourse, who has God to talk of, though he has not the name of any other friend to mention. He has no want either of work or pleasure, who can spend his solitary hours in the believing contemplations of eternal love, and of all the Divine attributes and works.

What delightful converse, then, may a serious Christian have with God alone! He is always present, always at leisure to be spoken with, always easy of access! He has no interest that will clash with our happiness. He never mistakes our meaning, or our character. If we converse with men, their passions and interests, their errors and weaknesses, render the trouble so great, and the benefit so small, that many have become thereby weary of the world, and have spent the rest of their time in deserts. In proportion, indeed, as any thing of God appears in men, their converse is excellent and delightful. But there is so much of vanity and sin in all of us, as exceedingly darkens our light, and damps the pleasure, and blasts the profit of our mutual converse.

How often have I been delighted in God, when I have found most deceit and darkness in the world! How often has he comforted me, when it was not in man to do it! How often has he relieved and delivered me, when all other help failed me! Looking to him has been my stay and rest, when the

creature has been a bruised reed, or as a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

6. As followers of Christ, let us endeavour to imitate him in this, to live upon God when men forsake us: and to be persuaded that while God is with us, we are not alone, nor forsaken.—Not that we are therefore to undervalue our useful friends, nor be unthankful for so great a blessing as a godly friend, nor be negligent in improving the company and help of such. "Two are better than one." The communion of saints is a mercy highly to be esteemed; and the under-valuing of it is at least a sign of declension in the spiritual life.—Nor are we on any pretence to slight our friends, and disoblige them, or neglect any duty that we owe them, or any means necessary to the regular continuance of their friendship.—Nor must we, without cause, retire from human society into solitude. To be weary of conversing with men, is often connected with a weariness of our duty. A voluntary retirement into solitude, when God does not call or drive us thither, is but retiring from the place or work which God has appointed us; and consequently a retiring rather from God than to God. Like some idle servants, that think they should not work so hard because it is but worldly business; and think their masters deal not religiously by them, unless they allow them to neglect their labour, that they may spend more time in serving God; as if it were not serving God to be faithful in their masters' service.

7. It must be acknowledged that very holy persons have lived in a state of retirement from human

converse. There are several circumstances in which this may become a duty. As for instance; When persecution leaves us no opportunity of serving or honouring God in any other situation—When natural infirmity, or any other accident, renders a person less serviceable to God and his church in society, than in solitude—When a person has committed a sin of such a scandalous nature, that, though he be truly penitent for it, no particular church can be satisfied to receive him into full communion—When some peculiar temptations can, after frequent trials, be no other ways effectually resisted, but by refraining from human converse—Also, when a person by age or sickness finds himself so near to death, that his actual preparation for it will be greatly promoted by solitude.

8. But when retirement from human converse has no such necessary call, it usually proceeds from some vicious distemper:—Perhaps from cowardice, when the soldiers of Christ, for fear of suffering, hide their heads, instead of confessing him before men,—Or from indolence and weariness of duty, when slothful and unprofitable servants hide their Lord's talents. For it is easier to run away from our work than to do it; and to go out of the reach of ignorance, malice, contradiction, and ungodliness, than to encounter and conquer them by the word of truth and a life of holiness; and to hide ourselves in some wilderness or cell, whilst others are fighting the battles of the Lord.—Or it may be owing to mere impatience. When we cannot bear the frowns, and scoffs, and violence of the ungodly, we fly from such trials, which we ought to overcome by

patience.—Or it may proceed from humour and discontent with our condition. Many retire from human converse to gratify their peevish resentment, expecting to find that in privacy, which they could not in public, nor is to be found any where on earth.—Sometimes it proceeds from melancholy, which is vexed in company, and indulges its own sickly imagination, by living, like the man possessed, amongst the tombs. —And sometimes it proceeds from pride and self-ignorance. If we think much better of ourselves than of others, we shall despise their converse. On the contrary, we should consider what proud, worldly, selfish, and disordered hearts we are like to carry with us into solitude, and that the nearest enemy is the worst, and the nearest trouble the greatest.

9. Thus many are led into solitude by their infirmities or vices; and if they live where popish vanity may seduce them, they will perhaps imagine that they are serving God, and entering into perfection, when they are but obeying their sinful inclinations. The duties of a public life are undoubtedly more in number, greater in weight, and of more excellent tendency to the honour of God, and the good of society, than the duties of retirement. "A good man," says Seneca, "is a common good. Nor can any thing be a common good, except every one has some share in it." Therefore, to prevent the evil of voluntary and unnecessary solitude, let the following considerations be attended to. As for instance;

While you do good but to few, and live almost to yourselves, you are too little promoting the honour of the Redeemer, and his kingdom in the

world, and too little subserving the design of his death and resurrection.—You will live in the greatest deficiency of the grace of charity, and therefore in a low and very undesirable state.—You will want the communion of saints, the benefit of public ordinances, and the edifying gifts and graces of others. In proportion to your doing so little good to others, you will have the less comfort yourselves. They have usually the most peace and comfort in themselves, that are the most profitable to others. "You must live for others, if you would live yourself," says Seneca: "for we can never be properly said to live well, when all our attention is fixed upon ourselves." O the delight that there is in doing good to many! None know it, that have not tried it. Not because such delight is owing to merit, but to the pleasing of God, and to the sweet and amiable nature of goodness itself, and to the efficacy of Divine promises, and because we receive by communicating, and because charity makes all the good we do to another to be to us as our own.

10. Considering, also, how dark and partial we are, and how heedless we are of ourselves, and with what difficulty we get or maintain acquaintance with our hearts, we so much the more need the eye of others. Even an enemy's eye may be useful, though malicious; and may do us good, while it intends evil. "An evil," says Bernard, "which none sees, none reproves; and where there is no fear of being reproved, the tempter will be the more bold, and sin will be practised with less hesitation." It is hard to know the spots in our faces, when we have neither glass nor beholder, to acquaint us with them. "So-

litude," says Chrysostom, " is the cover of all vices." In company this cover is laid aside, and vice, being more naked, is more ashamed. Beholders occasion the shame, which solitude is not acquainted with; and it is a piece of impenitency not to be ashamed of sin.— And we are for the most part so weak and sickly, that we are unable to subsist without the help of others. God has left some impotency, insufficiency, and necessity upon all, which should keep all men sociable, and make them acknowledge their need of others, and be thankful for their assistance, and be ready to do the good to others, which they would have others do to them.

11. In privacy, pride will have great advantage, and repentance great disadvantage. " Any person," as Cassianus observes, " may think himself patient and humble, as long as he keeps out of company; but his depraved nature will soon appear, whenever it meets with any provocation." We cannot easily know what sin or grace is in us, if we have not such trials as are not to be found in solitude.

Flying from the observation and judgment of others, is a kind of self-accusation; as if we confessed ourselves to be so bad, that we cannot stand the trial of the light. " A good conscience," says Seneca, " appeals to the multitude; but a bad conscience is perplexed with anxious thoughts, even in solitude. If what you do be truly good, let all men know it: if it be wicked, it is in vain to conceal it from others, while you know it yourself. And if you despise this single witness, how great is your misery!" Solitude is too much like death to be

desirable. He that does good is alive; but he is dead that is useless. "He," says Seneca, "lives indeed, who is serviceable to many. Numbers feel that he has life; while they that lie hid in a stupid inactivity, even anticipate their own death." And it is the most culpable death, and therefore the worst, to have live, and not to use it.

Once more: consider, that the nearest resemblance to heaven is a life of holy communion. In the heavenly Jerusalem none shall be solitary; but all the members shall, in perfect harmony, love and praise their Maker and Redeemer.

CHAP. IV.

Why the Presence of God in Solitude is desirable.

1. If God calls us into solitude, or if men forsake us, we may rejoice in this, that "we are not alone, because the Father is with us." Fear not such solitude, but be ready to improve it, if you be cast upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Christ, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for solitude, and need not fear if all the world should cast you off. If you be banished, imprisoned, or left alone, it is but a relaxation from your greatest labours, a cessation of your sharpest conflicts, and your removal from a multitude of great temptations. Though you may not cowardly retreat, or run away, from the sight of danger; yet if God will dispense with you, and let you live in greater peace and safety,

you have no cause to murmur. A fruit-tree that grows by the highway side, seldom keeps its fruit to ripeness within the reach of so many passengers. Even Seneca could say, " I never bring so good a temper out of company as I took into it. What I had been regulating, is put out of order. What I had banished from my mind, gains admittance again. Thus I receive great hurt from having much company." How many vain and foolish words corrupt the minds of those that converse with an ungodly world; while solitude is free from such temptations!

In solitude, you breathe not in so corrupt an air; you hear not the speeches which offend piety, modesty, and charity; nor the complaints of the discontented; nor the bitter words of the angry; nor the wranglings of the contentious; nor the slanders and reproaches of the malicious; nor the revilings of the ungodly cast upon the righteous; nor how the erroneous artfully corrupt the minds of the unwary; nor the distractions and clamours, too common in religious disputes; nor are pained with the oaths and blasphemies of the wicked, the imprudences of the weak, the persecutions of enemies, or the falling out of friends. In your solitude with God, you will not see the cruelty of proud oppressors; nor prosperity of the wicked, to excite your envy; nor the adversity of the righteous, to stir up your grief; nor worldly pomp to dazzle you; nor fading beauty to entice you; nor wasting calamities to afflict you. As you lose the help of your gracious friends, so you are freed from the effects of their peevishness, and other manifold imperfections. In a word, you are there half delivered from the vanity and vexations of the

world. And were it not that you are yet undelivered from yourselves, and your own depraved hearts, what felicity would your solitude be!

2. Alas! we cannot out-run our own diseases; we must carry with us into solitude the remains of our corrupted nature; our dead and dull, our selfish and earthly, our impatient and discontented minds; and, what is worst of all, our lamentable weakness of faith and love, our strangeness to God and heaven, and backwardness to the things of eternal life! O that I could escape these, though I were in the hands of the most cruel enemies! O that such a heart could be left behind! To out-run it, how gladly would I quit house, and land, and honour, and all sensual delights! O that I knew the place where there is none of this darkness, nor disaffection, nor distance from God! O that I could find it! O that I might dwell there, though I should never more see the face of mortals, nor ever hear a human voice, nor ever taste the delights of flesh!

Alas! foolish soul, such a place there is, that has all this, and more than this: but it is in paradise, not in the wilderness; it is above with Christ, not here upon earth! And am I yet so loath to die? Am I yet no more desirous of the blessed day, when I shall be unclothed of flesh and sin? O death, what an enemy art thou even to my soul, by frighting me from the presence of my Lord, and hindering my desires and willingness to be gone? This is wronging me much more, than by laying my flesh to rot in darkness. Fain would I know God; and love, and enjoy him more. But O this hurtful love of present life! O this unreasonable fear of dying!

" O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"—from this carnal unbelieving heart, that can sometimes think more delightfully of a wilderness than of heaven?—that can seek after God in desert solitude, among birds, and beasts, and trees; and yet is so backward to be loosed from flesh, that I might find him, and enjoy him in the world of glory? Can I expect that heaven should come down to earth, and that the Lord of glory should remove his court, and either leave the retinue of his celestial courtiers, or bring them all down into this simple world, to satisfy my fleshly mind? Or can I expect the translation of Enoch, or the chariot of Elijah? Is it not enough that my Lord has conquered death, and sanctified the passage, and prepared the place of my perpetual abode?

Well! Though a wilderness be not heaven, it shall be sweet and welcome for the sake of heaven, if from thence I may but have a clearer prospect of heaven; and if, by retiring from the crowd and noise of folly, I may but be better disposed to converse above, and to use, alas! my too weak and languid faith, till it be exchanged for the beatific vision. May there but be more of God, readier access to him, more flaming love, more heart-comforting intimations of his favour, in a wilderness than in a city, in a prison than in a palace; let that wilderness be my city, and that prison be my palace, as long as I abide on earth. If, in solitude, I may have Enoch's walk with God, I shall in due season have such a translation as will bring me to the same felicity which he enjoys; and in the mean time, as well

as after, it is no disadvantage, if by mortal eyes I am seen no more. If the chariot of contemplation will, in solitude, raise me to more believing, affectionate converse with heaven, than I could expect in tumults and temptations, it shall reconcile me to solitude, and make it my paradise on earth, till angels, instead of Elijah's chariot, shall convey me to the presence of my glorified Jesus.

3. Is it grievous to you to be alone, because you have been used to much company?—Consider, that company may so abuse you, that it may be more grievous to you not to be alone. You will not wish for the society of wasps and serpents; and even bees have such stings, that their honey may be bought too dear.

But can you say you are alone, while you are with God?—Is his presence nothing to you? Does it not signify more than the company of all the men in the world? There can be no want of man when we can speak with God. And were it not that God is here revealed to us in a glass, and that we are conversing with God in man, human converse would be of little worth. If you suggest, that solitude is disconsonant to a sociable mind; think again, that the most desirable society is no solitude. If God be nothing to you, you are not a Christian, but an atheist. If God be God to you, he is your all in all; and then should not his presence be instead of all?

O that I might get one step nearer to God, though I receded many from all the world! O that I could find that place on earth, where a soul may have nearest access to him, and the fullest knowledge and enjoyment of him, though I never more saw the face

of friends!—On these terms I should cheerfully say, with my blessed Saviour, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me;" and not without having the best reasons to assign for saying so. For if God be with me, the Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of all things is with me: he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted; who loves me best; whose love is more to me than the love of all my friends in the world; with whom my greatest business lies; with whom I may converse without reserve or interruption; and with whom I must live for ever.

4. If God be with me, the Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of all things is with me.—So that in him all things are virtually with me. I have that in gold and jewels which I seem to want in silver, lead, and dross. I can want no friend, if God vouchsafes to be my friend. I can enjoy no friend if God be my enemy. If God be reconciled unto me, I need not fear the greatest enemy. I shall not miss the light of a candle, if I have this blessed Sun. The creature is nothing but what it is from, and in God; and as it discovers him, and helps the soul to know him, serve him, or draw nearer to him. As it is the sinner's idolatry to thirst after the creature in the neglect of God, thereby making the world his God; so it approaches to the same aggravated sin, when we lament the loss of creatures more than God's displeasure. If I am under the wrath of God, I have so much greater cause for lamentation than for the loss, or absence, or frowns of mortals, as should almost make me forget that there is such a thing as man to be regarded. But if God be my friend in Christ, I have so much to think of with delight and

complacency of soul, as makes it extremely absurd inordinately to lament the absence of a worm, while I have his love and presence who is all in all. If God cannot content me, and be enough for me, how is he then my God? Or how shall he be my heaven and everlasting happiness?

5. If God be with me, he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted. I am wholly his, and have acknowledged his interest in me, and long ago disclaimed all usurpers, and penitently and unreservedly resigned myself to him. Where should I dwell, but with him who is my owner, and with whom I have made the most solemn covenant that ever I made? With whom should a servant dwell, but with his master? Or a wife, but with her husband? Or children, but with their father? I am nearer related to my God and Saviour, than to any other relation in the world. I have renounced all the world, as it stands in competition or comparison with my God. How shall I "hate father and mother, brother and sister, and wife and children for his sake," if I cannot spare them, or be without them, to enjoy him? To hate them is but to use them as men do hated things; that is, to cast them away with contempt, so far as they would alienate me from Christ, that I may cleave to him, and be satisfied in him alone. I am now married to Christ; and with whom should I delight to dwell, but with him who has taken me into so near a relation?

'O my dear Lord, hide not thou thy face from an unkind and unworthy sinner? Let me but dwell with thee, and see thy face, and feel the gracious tokens of thy love; and then, if thou seest it best

for me, let me be cast off by all the world; or, let all other friends be where they will, so that my soul may but be with thee. For thy sake, I have agreed to forsake all, and I resolve by thy grace to stand to this agreement.'

6. If God be with me, he is with me who loves me best.—The love of all the friends on earth is nothing to his love. How plainly hath he declared his love to me in the strange condescension, the sufferings, death, and intercession of his dear Son! in the communications of his Spirit, the operations of his grace, and the near relations into which he has brought me! in the course of his providences, by many and wonderful preservations and deliverances, and by the conduct of his wisdom through a life of mercies! What love appears in his precious promises, and in the glorious provisions he has made for me with himself to all eternity!

'O my Lord, I am ashamed that thy love is so much lost; that it has no better return from an unkind, unthankful heart; that I am no more delighted in thee, and swallowed up in the contemplation of thy love. I can contentedly let go all others, for the converse of some one bosom friend, as Jonathan was to David; and can I not much more be satisfied in thee alone? All men delight most in the company of those that love them best: when they seek satisfaction, it is not with the multitude, but in the converse of their dearest friends. And who, blessed God, should be so dear to me as thyself? Did not my unthankful heart basely neglect thy love, I should never be so unsatisfied in thee, but should heartily say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Though not only my friends, but "my flesh and my heart fail; yet thou, Lord, wilt be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Therefore how far soever I am from man, "it is good for me to draw near to thee." O let me dwell there, where thou wilt not be strange, "because thy loving kindness is better than life! In the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy comforts delight my soul!" Let me dwell as in thy family; and when I awake, let me be still with thee! Let me go no whither, but where I am still following thee! Let me do nothing, but thy work; nor serve any other, but when I may truly call it a serving thee. Let me hear nothing but thy voice; and let me know thy voice, by whatever instrument thou shalt speak! Let me never see any thing but thyself, and the glass that represents thee, and the books in which I may read thy name! Whether in company or solitude, let "me be continually with thee," and so thou vouchsafe to "hold me by my right hand, and guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to thy glory!"'

7. If God be with me, I shall be with him whose love is more to me than the love of all the friends in the world.—Their love may perhaps afford me some little comfort, as it flows from his: but his love is that only upon which I live. His love gives me life and time, health and food, books and understanding, provision, and the temperate use of it, friends, and the blessings they communicate. Sun, earth, and air, are not so useful and necessary to me as his love. The love of all my friends cannot heal

my sickness, nor pardon the smallest of my sins, nor assure me of God's forgiveness, nor restore the health of my soul, nor give lasting peace to my troubled conscience, nor banish the fears of death, nor secure my passage to everlasting life. Death will be death still, and danger will be danger still, and when all my friends have done their best. But my God is an all-sufficient Friend. He can prevent my sickness, or rebuke and cure it; or make it so good for me, that I shall thank him for it. He can blot out my transgressions, and forgive all my sins, and justify me, when the world and my own conscience condemn me. He can teach me to believe, repent, and pray; to hope, suffer and overcome. He can quiet my soul in the midst of trouble, and give me a well-grounded everlasting peace, and a joy that no man can take from me. He can deliver me from all the distempers and corruptions of my froward heart, and both ease and secure me in the painful war which is daily maintained in my own breast. He can make it as easy a thing to die, as to undress and go to bed. He can strip death of its terrible aspect, and with a mild and comfortable voice can preach to me the last and sweetest sermon, even what Jesus preached on the cross, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

And is this the difference between the love of man and of God? And do I yet lament the loss of man? And am I yet so backward to converse with God, and to be satisfied in his love alone? 'Ah, my God, how justly mayest thou withhold that love, which I thus undervalue; and refuse that converse, which I have first refused! How justly mayest thou

turn me over to man, to sinful man, whose converse I so much desire, till I have learnt, by dear-bought experience, the difference between an earthly and a heavenly friend.'

Have I not often enough found what man is in a time of trial? Have I not been told it over and over, and told it to the quick, by deceitful and selfish friends; by proud and conceited friends; by passionate and quarrelsome friends; by tender, faithful, but unable friends? How often have I found that human friendship is a sweet addition to our wo, a beloved calamity, an affliction which nature will not be without! Not because nature loves evil, nor is wholly deceived in its choice; (for there is good in friendship, and delight in holy love;) but because the good which is here accompanied with so much evil, is the beginning of a more high and durable friendship, and points us to the blessed society and converse which we shall have with Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem.—But how much better have I found the friendship of the all-sufficient God! His love has not only pitied but relieved me. He has not only been afflicted, as it were, in my afflictions; but has seasonably, powerfully, and sweetly delivered me. My burdened mind has been eased by his love, which was but more burdened by the fruitless love of all my friends. Often have I come to man for help and comfort, and gone away as from an empty cistern, that had no water to cool my thirst; but God has been a present help. Could I get near him, I was sure of light, how great soever my former darkness; I was sure of warming, quickening life, how dead soever I had been before. All my misery

was, that I could not get near him. My guilty soul could not get satisfying acquaintance with him. My earthly heart lay dead, and would not stir; or, if by any celestial force it began a little to move towards him, it soon fell down again. My carnal mind was entangled in diverting vanities. Thus have I been kept from communion with my God. Kept! not by external violence; not by bars, or bolts, or distance of place, or lowness of condition; nor by any misrepresentation or reproaches of man; but, alas! by myself, by the darkness, stupidity, and vile affections of a naughty heart. These, these have been the bars, and bolts, and jailors to keep me from my God. Had it not been for these, I might have got nearer to him; I might have walked and dwelt with him; yea, "dwelt in him, and he in me;" nor have missed my friends, nor felt my enemies.

And is it my sinful distance from my God, that has been my loss, my wilderness, my wo? Is it a nearer admittance to the presence of his love, that must be my recovery, and my joy, if ever I attain to joy? O then, my soul, lay hold on Christ the reconciler, and in him, and by him, draw near to God. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Love God in his saints, and delightfully converse with Christ in them, while thou hast opportunity. But remember thou livest not upon them, or on their love, but upon God: and therefore desire their company but for his; and if thou hast his, be content if thou hast not theirs. He wants not man, that enjoys God. Collect all thy love, thoughts, and desires, which have been scattered and lost upon

the creatures, and set them all on God himself, and press into his presence, and converse with him; and thou shalt find the mistake of thy present discontent, and thy sweet experience shall tell thee, 'thou hast made a happy change.'

8. If God be with me, he is with me with whom my greatest business lies.—What company should I desire, but theirs, with whom I must do my daily necessary work? I have more to do with God, than with all the world; yea, more and greater business with him in one day, than with all the world in all my life. I have business with mortals about houses, or lands, food or raiment, labours or recreations, private or public peace; but what are these to my business with God? Indeed, with holy men I have holy business; but it is only as they are messengers from God, and come to me on his business: but, even then, my business is much more with God than with them; with him that sent them, than with his messengers. My business with God is so great, that if I had not a Mediator to encourage, and assist me to do my work, and procure my acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul.

Therefore let man stand by; I have to do with the eternal God, and with him I am to transact, in this little time, the business of my endless life. I am to seek of God, through Christ, the pardon of all my great and grievous sins; and if I speed not, wo unto me that ever I was born! I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears. I have evidences of grace, but they are exceedingly blotted. I want assurances that God is my reconciled Father, and that he will receive me

to himself when the world forsakes me. I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and, alas! what rooted, inveterate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving and earthly heart, into such a proud and peevish heart, into such a perplexed and trembling heart, and not discern how great my business is with God? Can I survey my sins, feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses? Can I review my lost time, and all the grace I have ungratefully resisted, and all the mercies I have abused; or, can I look forward, and see how near my time is to an end? Can I think of the malice and diligence of Satan; the number, power, and policy of my enemies; the many dangerous snares and temptations that are around me; and my own ignorance, weakness, and unwatchfulness; and not know that my greatest business is with God? Can I feel and lament my afflictions, and think my burden greater than I can bear, and find that men cannot relieve me? Can I go mourning in the heaviness of my soul, and water my bed with tears, and fill the air with my groans, or feel my soul overwhelmed, and my words intercepted? Can I think of dying? Can I draw near to judgment? Can I contemplate heaven's everlasting joys, or hell's everlasting pains, and not feel that my greatest business is with God? —' O, my soul, the case is easily resolved, with whom thou art most seriously to converse. Where shouldst thou be, but where thy business is, and business so important?'

Alas! what have I to do with man! What can it do but make my head ache, to hear a deal of sense-

less chat, about the words and thoughts of men, or their lands and titles, and a thousand impertinencies, that only prove that the dreaming world is not awake? What pleasure is it to see the bustles of a bedlam world, and how they strive to prove or make themselves unhappy? How tedious and trifling are the discourses even of the learned, when God is not the mark they aim at? Were it not that some converse with men promotes my converse with God, and that my Master has placed me in society, and appointed me much of my work with others, and for others, and that much of his mercy is conveyed by others, man might stand by, and solitude would be better than the best society, and God alone should take me up.

Nothing is so much my misery and shame, as that I have so little will and skill in the management of my grand business; that my work is with God, and my heart no more with him. What might I not do in holy meditation or prayer one hour, if I were disposed, like one that has had so long a season, and so great a necessity for conversing with God? A prayerless heart, a heart that flies away from God, is most inexcusable in such a one as I, that have so much important business with him. It is work that must be done; and, if well done, will never be repented of. I have never returned from the presence of God, when I have really drawn near to him, as I have from the company of mortals, repenting the loss of my time, and trembling for my discomposure contracted by their vain and earthly discourse. I often repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and conversed with him so

negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the time, care, affections, or diligence employed in his holy work. O that I had lived more with God, though I had been less with some that are eminent in the world, or even with the dearest of my friends! How much more sweet would my life have been! How much more blameless, regular, and pure! How much more fruitful, and answerable to my obligations and professions! How much more comfortable in the review! How many falls, and wounds, and griefs, might have been prevented! O how much more pleasing is it now to my remembrance, to think of the hours in which I have lain at the Divine foot-stool, though it were in tears and groans; than to think of the time I have spent in converse with the greatest, most learned, or nearest of my acquaintance?

9. And as my greatest, so my daily business is also with God. He purposely leaves me under daily wants and necessities, and the daily assaults of enemies and surprise of afflictions, that I may be daily driven to him. He loves to hear from me. He would have me to be no stranger with him. I have business with him every hour, and need not want employment for all the faculties of my soul, if I know what it is to converse in heaven. Prayer, and every devout thought, have an object so great and excellent, as ought to possess me wholly. Nothing of God must be treated lightly. His name must not be taken in vain. "He will be sanctified in them that come nigh him." He must "be loved with all the heart." His servants need not be weary for want of employment, nor through its trifling and

unprofitable nature. Had I cities to build, or kingdoms to govern, I might more reasonably complain that my faculties are unemployed, than I can when I am to converse in heaven. In other studies, the delight abates when desire is gratified, and knowledge obtained; but in God there is infinitely more to be known, when I seem to know him best. I am never satisfied with the easiness of knowing him, nor is there any uneasiness or unworthiness in him to abate my desires; but I am drawn to him by his highest excellencies, and drawn on to desire more and more, by the infinite light which I have not yet beheld, and by the infinite good which I have not yet enjoyed. If I am idle, or seem to want employment, when I am to contemplate all the works and mercies, all the relations and perfections of the Lord, surely it is for want of eyes to see, or a heart inclined to my business. If God be not enough to employ my soul, then all the persons and things on earth are not enough.

And when I have infinite goodness to delight in, where my soul may freely let out itself, without any fear of exceeding love, how sweet should this employment be! Love is no more confined here, by the narrowness of the object, than knowledge. We can never love him in any proportion, either to his goodness or amiableness in himself, or to his love to us. What need have I then of any other company or business, when I have infinite goodness to delight in and to love, farther than such company or business may subserve this greatest work?

'Come home, then, O my soul, to God. Converse in heaven. Turn away thine eyes from be-

holding vanity. Let not thy affections kindle upon straw or briars, that go out when they have made a flash, or noise, and leave thee to thy cold and darkness. But come and dwell upon celestial beauties, and make it thy daily and most diligent work to kindle thy affections on the infinite everlasting good: and, thus, they will never be extinguished for want of fuel; but the longer they burn, the greater will be the flame. Though, while love is but a spark, thou canst not easily make it burn, and art complaining of thy cold and backward heart, that it is hardly warmed with the love of God; yet, when the whole pile has taken fire, and the flame ascends, then fire will breed fire, and love will produce love, and all the malice of hell itself shall never be able to suppress or quench it unto all eternity.'

10. If God be with me, he is with me with whom I may converse without reserve or interruption.—It is great encouragement to my converse with God, that no misunderstanding, no malice of enemies, no past sin, nor present frailty; no, nor the infinite distance of the most holy and glorious God, can hinder my access to him, or interrupt my leave and liberty of converse.—If I converse with the poor, their wants afflict me, being greater than I can supply.—If I would converse with the great, it is not easy to get access, and less easy to have their favour, unless I purchase it at too dear a rate. How strangely and contemptuously do they look on their inferiors! How must their word or smile be solicited! How soon are they weary of you! Especially if you would put them to any cost or trouble! With how much labour and difficulty must you climb to see the

top of one of those mountains? And when you are there, you are but in a place of barrenness, and have nothing to satisfy you for your pains, and may soon be glad to get far enough from them, and learn better to relish the accessible, calm, and fruitful valleys.

How different from this is my soul's converse with God! Company never hinders him from hearkening to my suit. He is infinite, and omnipotent, and all-sufficient for every individual soul, as if he had no other to look after in the world. When he is taken up with the attendance and praises of his heavenly hosts, he is as free and as ready to attend and answer the prayers and sighs of a contrite soul, as if he had no nobler creatures nor higher services to regard. I am often unready to pray; but God is always ready to hear. I am unready to come to him, walk with him, and delight myself in him; but he is never unready to entertain me. Many a time my conscience would have driven me away, but God has invited me to him, and rebuked my accusing and trembling conscience. Many a time I have called myself a prodigal, "a miserable sinner," when he has called me "his son," and reproved me for questioning his love. He has readily forgiven the sins, which I thought would have made my soul the fuel of hell. He has entertained me with joy, with music, and a feast, when I rather deserved to be cast out of doors. He has tenderly embraced me, when he might have said, "Depart from me, thou worker of iniquity; I know thee not." Little did I think he could ever forget the vanity and villany of my youth: when I had sinned against light; when

I had resisted conscience; when I had frequently and wilfully injured love: I thought he would never have forgotten it; but the greatness of his love and mercy, and the blood and intercession of his Son, have cancelled all. O how many mercies have I tasted, since I thought I had sinned away all mercies! How patiently has he borne with me, since I thought he would never have put up with more! And yet, except my sins, and the withdrawings of my heart, there has been nothing to interrupt our converse. Though he is God, and I a worm; though he is in heaven, and I on earth; yet he is near in all that I call upon him for. Though he has the praises of angels, he disdains not my sighs and tears. Though he is perfectly loved by spirits made perfect, he despises not the little spark of my weak and languid love. Though I injure him by loving him no more; though I often forget him, and have been out of the way, or refused to hear when he has called, and have ungratefully rejected the entertainment of his love, and have unfaithfully associated myself with those whose company he forbids me; yet he has not divorced me. O wonderful, that heaven will be familiar with earth, God with man, the Most High with a worm, and the Most Holy with a vile sinner! Man refuses me, when God entertains me. Those I never wronged reproach me; and God, whom I unspeakably injured, invites and entreats me, and condescends to me, as if he were obliged to serve me. Men abhor me, whom I have deserved well of: and God, from whom I deserved eternal torments, graciously accepts me. I upbraid myself with my sins; but he up-

braids me not. I condemn myself for them; but he will not condemn me. He forgives me sooner than I can forgive myself. I have peace with him, before I can have peace in my own conscience.

'Draw near then, O my soul, to him who is willing to have thy company; who frowns thee not away, except when thou hast sinned, that thou mayest repent and be fitter for his converse. Draw near to him, who will not wrong thee, by crediting thine enemies' false reports, or by laying to thy charge things that thou knowest not; but will forgive the wrongs thou hast done, and justify thee from the sins which conscience lays to thy charge. Come to him, who invites thee to come by his word and Spirit, by his ministers and mercies, and who promises, that "those who come to him, he will in nowise cast out." Walk with him, who will "hold thee by thy right hand." Speak to him who teacheth thee to speak, and understands and accepts thy stammering, and "helps thine infirmities," when thou "knowest not what to pray for as thou oughtest," and gives thee "groanings which cannot be uttered" by thy best chosen words. Speak to him, whom the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain: "but to this man will he look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at his word;" yea, "a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise." Walk with him who is never weary of the converse of the upright; who is never angry with thee but for flying from him, or from drawing back, or being too strange, and refusing the kindness and felicity of his presence. The day is coming when the proudest of the sons of men would be glad of a kind look from him, with

whom thou hast leave now to walk. How glad would those be of a father's smile, or of any intimation of hope and mercy from him, who will not now condescend to favour thee with their smiles, but delight to injure and abuse thee! Draw near to him, therefore, on whom the whole creation depends, and whose favour the greatest mortals will at last cry for, when all their pomp and pleasure can purchase nothing. Walk with him, who is love itself, nor think him unwilling or unlovely, nor let any artifices of the tempter drive thee from him. Having felt the storms abroad, methinks thou shouldst say, "How safe, how sweet, how good it is to draw near to God?"' Once more:

11. If God be with me, he is with me with whom I must live for ever.—My house or land, my walks or books, or even my friends, as clothed with flesh, are pleasures I must possess but a little while. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more;" for his body in heaven is spiritual and glorious. And though, when we come to Christ, we may converse with father or mother, with wife or children, as glorified saints; yet, in the relations in which we now stand, we shall converse with them but a little while. For "the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it;" or, as though they used it not: "for the fashion of this world passeth

away." Why then should I so much regard a converse of so short a continuance! Why should I be so familiar in my inn, and so fond of that familiarity, as to grieve at the thought of leaving it, and of going to my glorious, eternal home? Shall I love the company of a fellow-traveller, or perhaps of one that is going to a contrary place, and not take more pleasure in remembering my home?

O, my soul, consider, 'thou dost not dwell, but travel here. It is thy Father's house, where thou must abide for ever.' Though he is invisible, he is every step of thy way nearer to thee than any mortal. Walk then, "as seeing him who is invisible." Hearken to him when he speaks. Obey his voice. Observe his way. Speak to him boldly, though humbly and reverently, as his child. Tell him what ails thee. Look upon all thy sufferings as the demerit of thy sin. Confess thy folly and unkindness, crave his pardon, and remind him what and why his Son suffered.—Treat with him about thy future converse. Desire his grace, and give up thyself to his conduct and care. Tell him the history of thy crimes, with penitential tears and groans. Tell him, also, that where sin has abounded, his grace may now much more abound, and therefore be honoured the more. Tell him, that thou art most angry with that which offends him most, even thy disobedient, unthankful heart; that thou art weary of a heart that loves him no more; and that it will never please thee, till it loves him better, and is more desirous to please him. Tell him of thy enemies, and entreat the protection of his love. Tell him of thy infirmities, and beg not only his tender forbear-

ance, but his help; sensible that, "without him, thou canst do nothing;" and that, "strengthened by him, thou canst do all things." When thou fallest, despair not; but crave his hand to raise thee up again.—Especially speak to him of everlasting things, and thank him for his promises, and for thy hopes of what thou shalt be, and have, and do, among his saints for ever. Rejoice in those promised joys, even of seeing his glory, and of loving and praising him better than thou canst now desire. Begin those praises. And, as thou walkest with him, take pleasure in the mention of his perfections; "be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Delight thyself in considering what a God, and portion, all believers have; whither this God is now conducting thee; what he will do with thee; and how he will employ thee for ever. Joyfully celebrate the glory of his works, the righteousness of his judgments, and the holiness of his ways. Let his praises elevate thy heart and voice. Turn away all slavish fears, all hurtful doubts and griefs, that would interrupt or spoil the melody. Thy Father loves even thy complaints and tears; and how much more thy praises and thanksgivings? If indeed he seems to chide or hide his face, because thou hast offended him; let the cloud that is gathered by thy folly come down in tears; yet fly not from him, but beg his pardon, and the privilege of a servant, though unworthy to be treated as a son; and thou wilt find that he is merciful and ready to forgive; only return, and keep closer for the time to come.—If the breach, through thy neglect, be gone so far that thou seemest to have lost thy God, and to be cast off and forsaken; des-

pair not yet, for he does but hide his face till thou repent. Be not regardless of his withdrawings, and of thy loss. Cry out, 'My Father, my Saviour, my God, why dost thou hide thy face? Why hast thou forsaken me? What shall I do here without thee? O leave me not, lose me not in this howling wilderness! Let me not be a prey to any ravenous beasts, to sin and Satan, to my foes and thine!' Tell him, these are the lamentations of his child. Beg that thy childish follies may be pardoned; and though he correct thee, that he will not forsake his child. If thou hast not words to pour out before him, at least "smite upon thy breast;" and though thou art afraid or ashamed to "lift up so much as thine eyes unto heaven," yet look down and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" and it will tend to thy pardon and justification, and be a prayer which he cannot deny.—Or if thou hast long called upon thy Father's name, and hearest not his voice, and hast no return; inquire for him of them that know him, and are acquainted with his way; and ask the watchmen, where thou mayest find thy Lord. At length he will appear to thee, and first find thee that thou mayest find him, and will show thee where thou didst lose him, by losing thyself. Seek him, and thou shalt find him. Wait, and he will appear in kindness; for he never fails nor forsakes those that wait for him. Thou art surer in his covenant love, than thou canst believe or apprehend.

This kind of converse, O my soul, thou hast to maintain with thy God. Thou hast, also, the interest of all his afflicted servants to tell him of; the concerns of his kingdom; the fury of his enemies;

the dishonour they cast upon his name; the advancement of his Gospel and glory in the world. But still let his righteous judgment be remembered, and all be centered in his glorious, everlasting kingdom. —Is it not much better thus to converse with him whom I must be with for ever, about the place, the company, the work, and interests of my perpetual abode, than to be taken up with strangers, and be hindered in my way by their impertinencies?

CHAP. V.

How the Presence of God in Solitude is Attainable.

1. LARGELY as I have pointed out, in the preceding chapter, the reasonableness of saying in solitude, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me;" yet I am sensible there are other weighty reasons to be assigned which well deserve to engage our meditations; though here I shall but briefly mention them. As for instance:

Converse with God gives human converse all its excellency. Converse with man is only so far desirable, as it tends to our converse with God. And, therefore, the end must be preferred before the means.

All divine dispensations and ordinances are designed to assist our converse with God. It is the office of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and the usefulness of all the means of grace, and of all creatures, mercies, and afflictions, to reduce our straying souls to God, that we may converse with him, and enjoy him.

Converse with God is most suitable to those that are near death.—It best prepares for death. It is the nearest resemblance to the work we are to do after death. We had rather, when death comes, be found conversing with God, than with man. A dying man has principally to do with God; he is going to the judgment of God; and he must trust in his mercy. It therefore concerns us to draw near to God now, and be no strangers to him, lest strangeness at death should be our terror.

God's willingness to converse with me is the most wonderful condescension.—Will he converse with such a worm, with such a vile sinner! And, therefore, how inexcusable is my crime, if I refuse his company, and reject so great a mercy!

Even heaven itself is but our converse with God, and with his saints that are glorified.—Consequently, our holy converse with God here, is the state that most resembles heaven, and best prepares for it, and indeed is all the heaven there is upon earth.

2. In order to assist you in attaining to this converse with God, let the following directions be carefully attended to. As for instance;—be reconciled to God;—depend on the mediation of Christ;—get free from guilt;—cherish no idol in the heart;—live by faith;—and, keep the heart with all keeping. But, obvious as such directions are, there may be great incapacity in some persons, to be much in solitary contemplations, arising from melancholy, or other infirmities. The confusion and hurry, which will be apt to prevail in retirement, make it proper for such persons to attend, for the most part, to those religious duties which are carried on by the help of

others. Instead of well-digested meditations in solitude, they must content themselves with a little time in secret prayer, and with short occasional meditations; and be so much the more in social reading and hearing, prayer and praise, till their better state of bodily health, and more vigorous spirits, shall fit them for the desirable improvement of their solitude.

3. Make sure of your reconciliation to God in Christ, and of his being indeed your Father and Friend.—How "can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" Can you take pleasure in dwelling with consuming fire? Or, in conversing with the most dreadful enemy?

But that every doubting or self-accusing soul may not find a pretence for flying from God, let such know and consider, that God does not cease to be a Father whenever a fearful soul is drawn to question or deny it. Let them also know and consider, that in the offers of grace to all miserable sinners, and in the assured readiness of God to receive and embrace the truly penitent, there are such tidings as ought exceedingly to rejoice a sinner; and such abundant encouragements as ought to draw the most guilty to seek unto God for mercy.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the sweetest converse with God is for his children, and for those that have some assurance that they are his children. And, perhaps, you will say, that this is not easily attained: how shall we know that God is our friend? To this I answer, if you are unfeignedly friends to God, it is because he first loved you. Prefer him before all other friends, and before all the world's wealth and vanity. Use him as your

best friend, and abuse him not by disobedience or ingratitude. Own him, though at the dearest rate, whenever you are called to it. Desire his presence, and lament his absence. "Love him with all your heart." Think not hardly of him. Suspect him not. Misunderstand him not. Hearken not to his enemies. Receive not any false reports against him. Take him to be really better for you than all the world. Thus do, and doubt not but you are friends with God, and God with you. In a word, be but heartily willing to be friends to God, and that God should be your chiefest friend, and you may be sure that it is so indeed, and that you are and have what you desire; and then how delightfully may you converse with God!

4. Depend entirely on the mediation of Christ, the great Reconciler.—Without him there is no coming near to God; but "in his beloved" you shall be "accepted." Whatever fear of God's displeasure shall surprise you, presently fly to Christ for safety. Whatever guilt shall look you in the face, commit yourself and your cause to Christ, and desire him to answer for you. When the doors of mercy seem to be shut against you, fly to him that "has the keys," and who at any time can open to you and let you in. Entreat him to answer for you to God, to your own conscience, and to all accusers. By him alone you may boldly and comfortably converse with God; but out of him God will not know you.

5. If you would have sweet communion with God, take heed of bringing into his presence any particular guilt.—Christ himself never reconciled God to sin;

and the sinner and sin are so nearly related, that, notwithstanding the death of Christ, you shall feel that "iniquity dwelleth not with God, but he hateth all workers of it, and the foolish shall not stand in his sight;" and that if you will presume to sin because you are his children, "be sure your sin will find you out." O what fear, what shame, what self-abhorrence, and self-revenge will guilt raise in a penitent soul, when it comes with the soul into the light of the presence of the Lord! It will unavoidably abate your boldness and your comfort. When you should be taking a sweet complacence in his reconciled face and promised glory, you will be reproaching yourselves for your former sins, and be ready even to tear your flesh, to think that you should do as you have done, and use him as you would not have used a common friend, and that you have cast yourselves upon his wrath. But a peaceful conscience, a soul "washed in innocency," will walk with God in "quietness and assurance," without those frowns and fears which to others are a taste of hell.

6. Be sure that you bring no idols in your hearts, when you come to converse with God.—Take heed of inordinate affection to any creature. Let all things else be as nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your thoughts but God; and your minds may be farther separated from them than your bodies. Bring not into solitude or contemplation, a proud, or wanton, or covetous mind. It is of much greater importance, what heart you bring, than what place you are in, or what business you are upon. A mind drowned in ambition, sensuality, or

passion, will scarcely find God any sooner in retirement than in a crowd; for God will not own, nor be familiar with, such a one; unless he is returning from those sins to God. "What advantage is there," says Seneca, "in the greatest rural silence, if passions rage within?" Bring not thy house, or land, or credit, or carnal friend along with thee in thine heart, if thou wouldst walk in heaven, and converse with God.

7. Live still by faith.—Let faith, as it were, lay heaven and earth together. Look not at God, as if he were afar off. "Set him always before you, even at your right hand. When you awake, be still with him." In the morning thank him for your rest, and yield up yourself to his conduct and service for the whole day. Go forth as with him, and as doing his work. In every action, let the command of God, and the promise of heaven, be before your eyes, and upon your hearts. Live, as having incomparably more to do with God and heaven, than with all the world; that with Paul, you may say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." You must shut up the eye of sense, except in subordination to faith, and live by faith upon a God, a Christ, and a world that is unseen, if you would by experience know what it is to be above the brutish life of sensualists, and to converse with God.

'O Christian, if thou hadst rightly learned this blessed life, how high and noble would thy conversation be! How easily wouldst thou spare, and how little wouldst thou miss, the favour of the greatest mortals, or the presence of any worldly comfort! City or country would be much alike to thee;

only that place and state would be best to thee, where thou hast the greatest help and freedom to converse with God. Thou wouldst say of human society, as Seneca, " It is the same thing to me, whether I converse with a single friend, or with a multitude: I am satisfied with one, and with none." Thus being taken up with God, thou mightest, in prison, live as at liberty; and in a wilderness, as in a city; and in a place of banishment, as in thy native land; " for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and every where thou mayest find him, and converse with him, and " lift up holy hands unto him." In every place, thou art within the sight of home; and heaven is in thine eye, and thou art conversing with God, in whose converse the highest angels place their most transcendent felicity.'

8. How little cause, then, have all the church's enemies to triumph, since they can never exclude a true believer from the presence of his God, nor banish him into such a place where he cannot " have his conversation in heaven!" The stones that were cast at holy Stephen could not hinder him from " seeing the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." A Patmos allowed St. John to be " in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Christ never so speedily and comfortably owns his servants, as when the world disowns them, and abuses them for his sake, and hurls them about " as the offscouring of all things." When " the Jews had cast out the man" whom Christ had cured of his blindness, Jesus soon " found him." Persecutors do but promote the " blessedness and exceeding joy" of sufferers for Christ. How little reason,

then, have Christians to shun such sufferings, by any unlawful means; and to give so dear, as the hazard of their souls, for the sake of escaping the safety, honour, and happiness of martyrdom!

9. Indeed, we judge not, we love and live not, as saints must do, if we judge not that to be the truest liberty, and love it not as the best condition, in which we may most intimately converse with God. And O how much harder is it to walk with God, in a court, in the midst of sensual delights, than in a prison or wilderness, where we have none to interrupt us, and nothing else to engage us! Our prepossessed minds, our earthly hearts, or carnal affections, and the pleasures of a prosperous state, are the prisons and jailors of our souls. Were it not for these, how free should we be, though our bodies were confined to the straitest room? He is at liberty, who can walk in heaven, and have access to God, and make use of all the creatures in the world, for promoting his heavenly conversation. And he is the prisoner, whose soul is chained to flesh and sense, and confined to his lands and houses, and feeds on the dust of worldly riches, or wallows in the filth of gluttony, drunkenness, or lust, who is "far from God," and desires not to be near him; who says to God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" who loves his prison and his chains so well that he refuses to be set free, and hates those with the cruelest hatred, that endeavour his deliverance.

He is the poor prisoner of Satan, who has not liberty to believe, nor love God, nor converse in heaven, nor seriously mind and seek the things that

are most high and honourable; who has no liberty to pray, or meditate, or speak of things divine, or love the converse of those that do; who is tied so hard to the drudgery of sin, that he cannot leave it for a month, a week, or a day, in order to delight himself in walking with God. But he who lives in the family of God, and is employed in attending on him, and in conversing with Christ, and with heavenly objects; such a one has no reason to complain of his want of friends, or company, or accommodations, nor to be too impatient under any corporal confinement.

10. Lastly, keep your hearts with all keeping.—Let nothing have entertainment there, which would abridge your liberty of conversing with God. Fill not those hearts with worldly vanities, which are made, and new-made, to be the habitation of God. Desire not the company which would diminish your heavenly acquaintance and correspondence. Be not unfriendly, nor self-sufficient and self-conceited; but beware, lest under the ingenuous title of a friend, a special, prudent, faithful friend, you should entertain an idol, or an enemy to your love of God, or a competitor with your highest and best friend. It is not the specious title of a Friend, that will save you from the thorns and briars of disappointment, even from greater troubles than ever you found from open enemies.

11. O blessed be that high and everlasting Friend, who is every way suited to upright souls!—to their mind and memories, to their delight and love,—by unchangeable truth, inexhaustible goodness, unspotted light, dearest love, and firmest constancy! Why has my dark-sighted and drowsy soul been so

seldom with him? Why has it so often, so slightly, so unthankfully passed by, and not observed him, nor hearkened to his kindest invitations? What is all this vanity and vexation that has filled my memory, burdened my mind, and cheated and corrupted my affections; while my dearest Lord has been days and nights so unworthily forgotten, so contemptuously neglected, or loved, as if I loved him not? O that those lost and empty hours had been spent in the humblest converse with him, which have been dreamed away upon——I know not what!

12. 'O my God, how much wiser and happier had I been, had I rather chosen to mourn with thee than to rejoice and sport with any other! O that I had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the creature! For the time to come, let that be my friend, that most befriends my dark, and dull, and backward soul in its heavenly conversation! Or if there be none such on earth, let me be without earthly friends! O blot out every name from my corrupted heart, which hinders the deeper engraving of thy name! Ah! Lord, what a stone, what a blind ungrateful thing, is a heart not touched with celestial love! Yet, Lord, shall I not run to thee, when I have none else that will know me? Shall I not draw near to thee, when all fly from me? When daily experience cries out so loud, None but Christ—God or nothing—ah! foolish heart, that has not thought of it! Where, Lord, is that place, that cave, or desert, where I might soonest find thee, and fullest enjoy thee? Is it in the wilderness that thou walkest, or in the crowd; in the closet, or in

the church? Where is it that I might soonest meet with God?

'But, alas, I now perceive I have a heart to find, before I am like to find my Lord! O lifeless stony heart, that is dead to him that gave it life, and to none but him! Could I not love, or think, or feel at all, methinks I were less dead than now; less dead, if dead, than now I am alive! I had almost said, "Lord, let me never love more, till I can love thee; nor think more on any thing, till I can more willingly think of thee!" But I must suppress that wish; for life will act; and the motions of nature are necessary to those of grace. And therefore in the life of nature, and in the glimmerings of thy light, I will wait for more of the celestial life. My God, thou hast my consent; it is here attested under my hand; separate me from what and whom thou wilt, so that I may but be nearer to thee! Let me love thee more, and feel more of thy love, and then let me love or be beloved of the world, as little as thou wilt!— I thought self-love had been a more predominant thing; but now I find repentance has its anger, its hatred, and its revenge. I am truly angry with my heart, that has so often and foolishly offended thee. Methinks, I hate that heart, that is so cold and backward in thy love, and almost grudge it a dwelling in my breast. Alas, when love should be the life of prayer, the life of meditation, the life of sermons, and of holy conference, and my soul in them should long to meet thee, and delight to mention thee, I wander, Lord, I know not whither! Or, I sit still, and wish, but do not rise, and run, and follow thee; yea, I do not what I seem to do; all is

dead, all is dead for want of love; I often cry, O where is that place where the quickening beams of heaven are warmest, that my frozen soul might seek it out! But whither can I go, to city or to solitude? Alas! I find it is not place that makes the difference! I know that Christ is perfectly replenished with life, and light, and love; and I hear him, as our Head and treasure, proclaimed and offered to us in the gospel. This is thy reward. "He that hath the Son hath life." O why then is my barren soul so empty? I thought I had long ago consented to thy offer; and then according to thy covenant, both light and life in him are mine. And yet must I still be dark and dead?—Ah! dearest Lord, I say not that I have too long waited; but if I continue thus to wait, wilt thou never find the time of love, and come and own thy panting, gasping worm? Wilt thou never dissipate these clouds, and shine upon this dead and darkened soul? Hath my night no day? Thrust me not from thee, O my God; for it is a hell to be thrust from thee?

'But surely the cause, could I find it, or rather could I cure it, is all at home. Surely it is my face that is turned from God, when I say, "his face is turned from me." And if "my life," while on earth, must be out of sight, and "be hidden" in the root, "with Christ in God;" if all the rest be reserved for that better world, and I must here have but these small beginnings, O make me more to love and long for thine appearing; and not to fear the time of my deliverance, or unbelieving to linger in this Sodom, as one that would rather stay with sin, than come to thee! Though sin has made me

backward to the fight, let it not make me backward to receive the crown: though it has made me a loiterer in thy work, let it not make me backward to receive those wages which thy love will give to our pardoned, poor, accepted services! Though I have too often drawn back when I should have come unto thee, and have walked with thee in thy ways of grace; yet heal that unbelief and disaffection which would make me draw back, when thou callest me to possess thy glory! Though the sickness and lameness of my soul have hindered me in my journey, yet let my painful fatigues help me in my desires to be delivered, and to be at home; where, without the interposing nights of thy displeasure, I shall perfectly feel richest love, and walk with thy glorified saints, in the light of thy glory, triumphing in thy praise for evermore! Amen.'

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

IN SECRET.

BY THE

REV. JOHN CORBET,

LATE OF CHICHESTER.

PREFACE.

That any man who knows that he possesses a rational and immortal spirit, should be capable of occupying his thoughts exclusively with a number of exterior objects, from which he is sure he shall soon be separated for ever; and of neglecting to make his soul, which is more to him than all other created beings can be, the object of his regards, seems strange and unnatural. To converse with others, and not to converse with ourselves; to form a judgment of the character of many around us, and never to attempt to form any correct estimate of our own; to visit our neighbours, and to observe with interest the circumstances of their condition, and not to avail ourselves of the power of self-inspection, to examine with accuracy the interior of our own minds, is indeed very foolish; and were it not so common, would be very surprising.

The fact, however, is easily accounted for. If a man is not comfortable at home, it is natural that he should seek to be as much abroad as possible. If his own dwelling is very ill furnished—if it is gloomy and dark—if, when he enters it alone, disquieting apprehensions get hold of him, and recollections, or anticipations of real or imaginary evils seldom cease to appal him, it is not wonderful that

he should wish to be elsewhere; unless, when he retreats for a while to his own mansion, to arrange some selfish schemes, or, perhaps, to perform some deeds of shame or guilt, from which his avarice or his conscience would wish to exclude every outward observer. In other words, from ignorance of themselves—from a suspicion, that were they to examine very closely their moral condition, they might find little that is satisfactory, and very much adapted to unsettle their tranquillity—from the remorse for what is past, and the anxiety or terror for what is to come, which this inquiry would awaken—from secular habits, which they find too strong to be broken, disinclining and disqualifying them for intellectual exercises, how numerous are those who will never attempt, who will never dare, to "commune with their own hearts." This voluntary alienation from themselves is extremely unwise, for the time will come when they can go abroad no longer; and when the external objects in which they now delight will cease to visit them; when they must be confined amidst the solitude, the pollution, and the alarms of their own wretched habitation; and unless that heavenly Comforter, whom they now exclude, shall deign to visit them, they shall find themselves more miserable than the man confined by disease in some dark and lonely hovel, amidst the hissing of serpents, or the progress of flames. How much wiser to invite the Spirit of God now, to enlighten it with his truth, to place within it the unsearchable riches of the Saviour, to shed abroad in it the love of God, and to convert it into a holy temple for himself, the chosen scene of his perpetual residence.

It does not seem possible to reconcile an entire neglect of self-examination with the existence of the Christian character. A true Christian justly attaches so much importance to the question of his acceptance with God, and of his condition through eternity—all earthly interests are so trivial in his estimation, in comparison of this spiritual and eternal interest, that were he capable of attending exclusively to the former, and neglecting the latter, he would, in this single part of his character, find decisive evidence against himself. He will approach the question, indeed, with deep solemnity; his inquiries may often conduct him to no satisfactory result; and when his conclusions are favourable on the whole, they will always be formed with modesty, and fear will often be found mingling itself with hope. But, unless, where some unnatural languor, some temporary insensibility, has invaded his better nature, he will be unable to avoid a frequent and anxious examination of the foundation of his eternal hopes—some earnest attempts to comply with these sacred injunctions, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith"—"give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

But besides the evidence of his acceptance with God, which a Christian desires to possess, he is taught to attach so much importance to deliverance from the power of sin, and to the acquisition of true holiness, on their own account, that he cannot avoid looking within himself, to observe how these processes are going forward. He knows how his soul has been occupied and defiled with sin; how it has been the abode of false judgments respecting God

and spiritual things, of vain imaginations, of unholy feelings, of base motives, of degrading preferences, of selfishness, and pride, and unbelief, and enmity to the blessed God, and his most holy law, and worldly affections, and all disobedience. He has been humbled to the dust in the presence of his God, on account of this heart, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He knows, that if, as he hopes, he has become the subject of a begun transformation, these hated corruptions have been restrained and subdued, they no longer occupy his soul exclusively; but that a train of heavenly principles have been introduced within him, by the Spirit of God, which already bear sway in his soul; betwixt which and the principles of nature, a conflict has begun, which will terminate in the expulsion and destruction of the latter. Is it possible, then, that a Christian can abstain from a frequent and earnest inspection of his heart, in which so much is to be seen, and to be done, adapted to stir up all that is within him? Is it possible that he can more strongly desire to have satisfactory evidence of the prosperity of his temporal interests, than to have such evidence of the prosperity of his spiritual interests—that he is become more free from that indwelling corruption, which grieves, degrades, and enslaves him, offends his God, and interrupts fellowship with him; that he is making some additions to that holiness which is at once the honour and the felicity of his nature; which pleases his God, and conforms him to his likeness?

But while the man has good reason to suspect the genuineness of his religion, who habitually

neglects to examine himself, it is certain that persons of true piety may greatly err, by the comparative infrequency with which they attend to this exercise, as well as by the superficial manner in which they engage in it. In this holy art, as in other acquirements, practice, under the divine blessing, makes proficiency. And it is no slight and passing look that will suffice; nor ought we to be easily satisfied with appearances. A close and deliberate attention to the state of the soul, an observation of it in all its aspects, a laborious scrutiny of its inmost principles, is indispensable to attain the object. Nor is it easy to conjecture how greatly Christian improvement is retarded; how many infirmities, omissions of duty, perhaps positive evils, being unobserved by the individual, are suffered to remain, in the state of his heart towards God and towards man, in his temper, in his talk, and even in his actions—in consequence of self-examination being sparingly practised.

No man ever reached eminence in piety, who was not much alone, communing with his own heart, and with his God: and at a period when the bustle of life has become so excessive—when the time and the activity of so large a proportion of society are unavoidably filled to such a harassing degree with what is secular—when the mind is so incessantly led to what is external and worldly, and withdrawn from what is secret and spiritual, Christians seem peculiarly called upon to "watch unto prayer," lest they become strangers to their own closets, and their own hearts, till the divine life languish, and almost die within them. When there is reason to appre-

hend, also, that with many Christians there is too little humility to endure, and too little enlightened love to administer, that "exhortation of one another daily," by which, among other influences, the excellence of primitive believers was brought to shine so brightly as it did; it is incumbent on Christians to be more faithful and severe with themselves; and to endeavour, if possible, to compensate for this want of superintendence from others, by adding as much as they can to the vigilance of their own.

In conducting this difficult, but most laborious process, the following little Work, by an eminent servant of Christ, will, I think, be regarded as a very valuable help, by most Christians. A good many years ago, a copy of it fell into my hands, I do not recollect where; but I was led to purchase and to peruse it, by observing a prefixed recommendation by the Rev. William Unwin, the well-known friend and correspondent of the poet, Cowper. Although there have been several English editions, I never saw a copy of the book, except the one in my possession. Having often perused it with pleasure, and, I trust, with some profit, I frequently handed it about among my friends, who all regretted that they could not have a copy of their own. Very lately, a person to whom I had lent it, brought it to the present Publisher, who had been previously urged to its re-publication by a gentleman in London, who most deservedly ranks high in the religious world. At his request, I have prepared these few introductory sentences; and I feel assured that no one will find fault with me for having introduced him to the company of Mr. Corbet.

The Work is short, but is on that account the better fitted for its design. Besides, its value is not less remarkable than its brevity. And while in most other Treatises on self-examination, (and we have many very valuable ones, among which I would take the liberty of recommending that little treasure, "Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ,"* to those who may be unacquainted with it,) the subject is very advantageously considered in a didactic manner; doctrine and rule are here clothed with all the charm of biography, of the private memoirs of a wise and holy man, written by himself. And the only caution which I would suggest to the serious reader is this, that he must not be cast down if his own piety does not exactly equal that of Mr. Corbet. The babe must not be excluded from the privileges of the family, nor must he attempt to exclude himself, because he has not yet reached the stature of the man. In contemplating the attainments of eminent saints, we must be grateful if we possess them in kind, though we want them in degree; a holy zeal to imitate them should be awakened within us; and in the strength of that grace by which they were what they were; and by the use of such means as they employed, we must endeavour to "forget what is behind, and reach to what is before."

I cannot avoid extracting the two following recommendations of this little treatise from the preface of Mr. Unwin. The former is from a minister of eminence in the English church, whose name Mr.

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* An Essay on Self-Examination has been prefixed to this excellent Treatise, by Dr. Chalmers.

Unwin suppresses; the latter is from the pen of the pious and elegant Howe. "There is no book," observes the former, "I have so often read as this; it is always on my study-table; it is my vade mecum in travelling; it is by my bed-side in sickness; I can read a little in this when I can read no other author; it is the best manual I know for a Christian, and for a minister; it will furnish excellent materials for addressing conscience, and for directing men to judge of their spiritual state."

"Here," says Mr. Howe, "are vivid representations of faith, love, and a heavenly mind; of humility, meekness, self-denial, and entire resignation to the will of God, in their first and continued motions. —Here it may be seen how an heart touched from above, works and tends thitherward; how it depresses itself in humiliation, dilates itself in love, exalts itself in praise, submits itself under chastenings; how it draws in its refreshings and succours as there is need.—What is here presented, as it may be of great use to all who seriously design the Christian life, so it hath a special use for such as design it not, thinking there is no such thing." Again, "You may see this worthy man considered the Gospel as a Gospel of salvation, and that he not only taught, but used it accordingly. How solicitous was he to ground his hope of eternal life substantially and strongly! How warily did he feel his way, and labour to understand and to know practically how he might safely appear before his Judge!"

H. HEUGH.

Glasgow, 13*th May*, 1823.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

IN SECRET.

INTRODUCTION.

Inquiry into the State of his Soul.

In order to peace of conscience, and assurance of my good estate towards God, it must in reason be supposed, that I may rightly understand the marks of sincerity set down in God's word; as also the ruling inclination and motions of my own soul; and that I may be so far assured of my right understanding of the things aforesaid, as to have no reasonable ground for doubting thereof. For I have no other ordinary way to know my sincerity, in order to the said peace and assurance, but to examine it according to my best understanding, by the marks thereof set down in God's word.

In this self-examination, it is requisite that I use all diligence and impartiality with constancy: and that I earnestly pray for God's assistance in it, and heartily offer myself to his search, as David did, Psalm cxxxix. 23.

Wherefore, if upon the most impartial and diligent search that I can make, according to the best of my understanding, together with earnest and constant prayer to God to assist me therein, as in my greatest concern; it doth most rationally appear to me, that the ruling inclination and motions of my soul are agreeable to the marks of sincerity set down in God's word, then my conscience, doing its office aright, is to judge of me accordingly, namely, that I am sincere. And in this judgment I acquiesce, because it is the judgment of God's agent and minister, which he hath set up within me to judge, under him, of my eternal state, according to his law, by which he himself doth and will judge me.

God hath the same aspect upon the soul, which conscience, his vicegerent, hath; as it ordinarily judgeth not against him, or without him, but under him, and according to his judgment either acquitting or condemning. To this purpose the Apostle speaketh, 1st John iii. 20, 21. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

PART I.

State of my Soul, according to the strictest Search that I can make.

Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.—PSALM cxxxix. 23, 24.

WRITTEN IN 1663.

As far as I am able to discern my heart and ways, I have chosen the Lord for my portion, I take up my rest in him, and not in the creature. To love, and fear, and admire, and bless him, and to have communion with him, is my chief joy; and the eternal vision and fruition of God is my great hope. I would not only have God hereafter, but here in this world for my chief good. He is even now better than all the world.

I come to God by Jesus Christ; and as I believe in God, I believe also in Christ, and rejoice and glory in him; and acknowledging my own sinfulness and unworthiness, I rest entirely on him as the ground of my justification to life, and of all favour and acceptance with God.

I receive Christ as my Lord, and give up myself to him. I let him into my heart by faith. I esteem him precious, and am willing to suffer the loss of all, that I may win him.

I desire to know him in the power of his death

and resurrection, and am much grieved that I do so weakly experience that power, and feel it not more operative in me, in my dying to sin and the world, and in living and walking in the Spirit.

I do not cease to lament the more heinous sins of my life; and cannot forbear continually imploring the pardon of them. I do not return again to them, and I resolve never so to do.

I watch and pray, and strive against all sin, but especially against those sins to which I am more especially inclined. My conflicts are daily, and I am put hard to it; but I do not yield up myself to any sin, nor lie down in it, yea, I do not suffer sinful thoughts to lodge in me.

I am many times much discomposed, damped in spirit, deadened in duty, distracted in my studies, and molested and hindered every way, by the sin that dwelleth in me. But I resolve, that sin shall have no rest in my soul, and that I will never enjoy it.

Though I cannot keep sin out of my heart, yet it doth not reign in my mortal body, nor do I yield my members to the service of it.

I would fulfil all righteousness, and owe nothing to any man but love. I had a hundred fold rather suffer wrong, than do wrong.

It was said of Christ, that no guile was found in his mouth; and of the faithful company that followed the Lamb, that no guile was found in their mouth. And that it may be so with me, I endeavour with my whole heart.

I trust God with my chief outward concernment; even with that about which I am most solicitous,

and wherein to be satisfied is of great moment to me, for that it hath as great an influence upon my spirit as any outward thing hath. And I do believe that God will provide for me herein, or otherwise supply the want of it.

My earnest desire of God is, that my outward condition may be so stated by his wise and gracious providence, as I may be least exposed to temptation, and best disposed and furthered unto duty.

I have an inclination to seek self, particularly in vain applause, and that in religious services; and herein I have been highly guilty: but I shame myself for it before God, and I am willing to be satisfied in the praise that comes from him alone; and I trust through his grace, that I can deny myself in matter of reputation to do his will.

I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his saints. The broken estate of the church, especially by intestine evils, is a great trouble to my spirit. The scandals of professors I am truly grieved at, and I would not by their weaknesses seek to excuse my own faults, or an applauding of my own virtues.

I have no settled bitterness and revenge against my enemies, but I love, pity, and pray for them. As concerning God's enemies I am more provoked, but I would not be inhuman or cruel against them; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

I contemn none, I would not imbitter the spirit of any. I would answer all obligations of courtesy, as accounting it a righteousness. I would not insult over the weakness of any; and this is partly out of natural tenderness and moral considerations; and

I find, that the goodness and kindness of God, the meekness and gentleness of Christ, hath hereunto made impression upon me.

I find upon the review of my life past, according to the clearest judgment that I can make, that I have not gone backward, but proceeded forward, in the ways of godliness. And this increase I reckon not by sudden fits now and then happening, but by the main progress of the work in the total sum.

I have been grieved that I am no more elevated in the hope of heaven, and that I cannot attain to a longing desire to be gone hence, and to be there with Christ. I have laboured to raise up my heart, and have had enlargement, even when deadness and flatness had been upon me. I think sometimes, were my evidences clear for heaven, I would exult to be gone hence this very hour; but I find not this readiness at all times.

When I have had a good design in hand for God's glory, and some public benefit, I watched against vanity of mind, and vainglory in carrying it on; and I desire purely to aim at God's glory, and to be satisfied with my reward in him. And I take heed, that I forget not my mortality, when I am pursuing that design; but I would fain bring up myself to this frame, to be contented to be taken hence in the midst of it, as judging that I shall be no loser by my removal, and that God cannot stand in need of that service.

Lord, forgive my inordinate self-love, which hath disturbed the actings of pure charity in several instances of moment. Self-love hath had motions contrary to the love of God and my neighbour.

Nevertheless my judgment has disallowed it, and I have, for the most part, done that which the love of God and my neighbour did command.

O Lord, forgive my ten thousand talents! I come to Jesus Christ, who hath made satisfaction, and lay this heavy reckoning to his account. Lord, forgive my iniquity, for it is exceeding great!

WRITTEN IN 1675.

Upon the review of the foregoing evidences, after twelve years, I find through grace the same abiding in me, and more and more rooted. And some particulars which made me more to doubt of my good estate, I find to be since that time in a greater degree vanquished.

I have done what in me lies, to call to remembrance all my remarkable sins, from my childhood and youth till now: and as far as I can judge, I have repented of them both generally and particularly. And I now repent of them all, from the bottom of my heart, with a self-abhorrence, if I can know my own heart by the strictest and most impartial search that I can make.

Upon the best judgment that I can make of the nature of sin, and the frame of my own heart and course of life, I know no sin lying upon me, which doth not consist with habitual repentance, and with the hatred of sin, and with an unfeigned consent, that God be my Saviour and Sanctifier, and with the loving of God above all.

The mercy of God towards me in the prolonging of the day of grace; in the striving of his Spirit; in

his chastisements; in the checks of conscience; in the recovery of my soul out of distempers and backslidings; doth greatly affect my heart, and strongly engage me to him. This makes me often call upon my soul, and all that is within me, to bless his holy name.

Though my spiritual growth be very low and slow; yet to this present time, I have not grown worse, but better; speaking of growth in the whole space, or greater spaces of my time past, and not every particular day.

By prayer and endeavours long continued, I have in some measure overcome a special very sinful distemper of mind, and gained the contrary temper against a natural propensity.

Though my faith in Christ be weak, yet to be a partaker of his promises, I am ready to part with all that is dear in this world; and I have no hope of happiness but in Christ.

Though I have had doubtings touching the promised salvation, yet I know that as to my own felicity, I prize nothing more than that salvation, being the glorifying and enjoying God for ever, and I embrace it as my best good.

I love Christ, whom I have not seen, and I am affected towards him, as towards a person who both taught and did the most excellent things, and promised a most excellent state to his followers, and purchased their redemption at the dearest rate.

I am heartily grieved for loving God so little: yet I am sure this I wrote according to a full persuasion at that time, viz. I love nothing more than God. In my esteem and choice, I prefer the spiri-

tual and heavenly, incomparably before the animal and earthly life. And this esteem and choice is made good by performance in ordinary.

I love to love God: and I desire this love not only as an evidence of my salvation, but for itself. I had much rather have a heart to love him perfectly, than to have all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world.

My conscience bears me witness, that in the present exercise of my ministry, I have no self-end of worldly advantage, or reputation among men, or any interest of the carnal mind; but if the command of Christ, and the necessities of souls did not oblige me to this service, I should gladly retire to privacy and solitude.

My temporal estate is mean and low, yet I am contented with it, and humbly bless God for what I have. I live in as narrow a compass for expenses as I can, that I may have something to give to the poor, and to be helpful to those that are in need, according to my ability. And as God hath required of us to love mercy; and our Saviour hath said, "It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive;" so I have more pleasure in giving a portion to the needy, as far as my mean estate will bear, than in laying out for the delight of my own sense or worldly conveniences. And this proceeds not from a conceit of merit in any thing that I can do, but from a love to please God, and do good.

Though I have a good knowledge about the premises, yet I am apt to waver about the conclusion. And though I apprehend the evidences of my sincerity to be clear, yet a timorousness remains in me.

Though I have not as yet overcome the fear of death, yet I am sure, that the unwillingness that is in me to die, is not that I might enjoy the pleasures of sense, or any gratification of the animal life.

I feel in myself a burden of sin and corruption: much sensuality, earthliness, selfishness; nevertheless I judge, there is that predominance of love to God and holiness, which I hope is unmoveably seated in my soul; whereupon I hope that it cannot be, that I should be cast out of his blissful presence into that perdition, which is a state of immutable hatred of him.

I apprehend, that the most horrid and hellish state of hell itself lies in its everlasting and utmost enmity against God.

Thus I am searching and trying my heart and ways; and what I find by myself, I write down, that I may have it by me for my relief in an evil day, and an hour of temptation. For I must expect the time, when by weakness, or anguish of body or mind, I may be disabled to recollect myself, and duly to state the case of my own soul. And the powers of nature may so fail, that I may have but a very weak apprehension of what I have to do in this great concern.

I am warned by the parable of the ten virgins to look to it, that together with my lamp, I may have oil in my vessel, and be ready to enter in with the bridegroom at his coming.

Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, to me one of the chiefest of sinners! O my exceeding sinfulness! O the riches of thy goodness towards me! Should not I loathe my carnal self? Should not I grieve for grieving thy Spirit? I desire to do so; I hope to do so.

Do what thou wilt with me, so thou pardon and sanctify, and save me! I am afraid of thy judgments; I can endure but little; O how weak is my heart! Nevertheless, I will endeavour, and I trust, through grace, that I shall be enabled to bear thy correcting hand. Thou art wise and holy; thou art merciful and gracious; thou retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy!

O spare me, and consider me, and deal with me not after my sins, and reward me not after mine iniquities; but as far as the east is from the west, so far remove my transgressions from me; comfort me, and satisfy me, for I wait for relief from thee! Whatsoever befals me, I will put my trust in thee!

I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. Lord, increase my faith. O my God, I lie at thy feet and mercy; I put my sinful distressed soul into the hands of Jesus Christ, and I rest on the covenant of grace made in him, as all my salvation, and all my desire. Amen.

WRITTEN IN 1676.

O THE wonderful mercy of God towards me, a most vile and wretched sinner, in convincing, rebuking, and awakening me unto a self-abhorrence, and an utter detestation of my sins, my special sins, so that I cannot be reconciled to them.

Since the more powerful awakening of my conscience, I never have, and am persuaded I never shall return to those former sins, which made a breach between God and my soul.

I hate every sin impartially. A sinful state is, in my internal sense, a horrid and a hellish state.

I find myself firmly resolved to give up any part of my worldly estate, that I shall be found to hold to another's wrong. If it be doubtful where the right lies, I am resolved first to endeavour a reference to conscientious, knowing men; and if that cannot be fitly had, to submit it to a legal trial, with a desire that right may take place. I know not that I hold any such estate, or that there is any doubt of my legal right to any thing that I possess; but I have made supposition for the trial of my own spirit.

When I had a father or mother, I would have trusted them, to defend or deliver me from any evil, from which it was in their power to defend or deliver me. In the same manner I now trust to my loving wife. Why then should I be suspicious of God, in whose hands I am? Why should I doubt of his dear love and tender mercy towards me, or call in question his good-will to preserve or deliver me from any affliction, that would be too hard for me to bear; or to sustain and comfort me under any suffering which he sees fit to inflict upon me?

If, when I was more careless and forgetful of God, and when I ventured upon breaches with him, he was pleased to convince me of my sin, and to rouse me up to a greater care, and to make me more earnest for pardon, and for healing, and for all needful grace, and more thoroughly resolved to follow him throughout; surely he will not refuse me in my addresses for more grace, and a more confirmed state of holiness. If I "follow on to know the Lord," I shall know him, and see his salvation

Though death and judgment be of dreadful consideration; though God be holy and just, and I be vile, and guilty, and worthy of eternal perdition; yet why should I doubt of mercy and forgiveness, and of support and comfort in the darkness of death, and of justification in the day of judgment, from a merciful and faithful God, through a powerful Redeemer and Advocate; seeing as an humble, penitent believer, I lie at his feet, and cast myself into his arms, and wait on his grace, and am resolved to keep his ways, and never to return to folly.

I more desire to be sincere, than to know that I am so. The comfort and delight of being and doing good, I set not so much by, as the very being and doing good. To love God, and to be conformable to him, is that which I most of all desire.

I will trust God in his ways. I will strive against an over-timorous solicitude about my salvation, and will commit myself to God, who is infinite goodness and love, and I will lie down and take my repose therein.

I am grieved, when I observe, or hear of the scandals of some professors; and the disorders of those, that are in charity to be judged sincere; and the follies and frailties of the more sincere and upright. And it humbles me, by causing me to reflect upon myself, and my own faultiness, and weakness, and proneness to offend; and it makes me more to desire the heavenly society, and to be among the spirits of just men made perfect.

My sins of sensuality in every kind and degree, I search out, and repent of. I am kept by grace from gross sins of this sort. In the gratifications

of sense, which are lawful in general, I scrupulously dread excess, and undueness of circumstances. How earnestly do I desire an absolute purity!

All envy, unrighteousness, uncharitableness, hard-heartedness, undutifulness, and base selfishness, which is the root of all, I have seen, lamented, and abhorred. The motions and stirrings of mind, that way, are suppressed and dislodged: I will never give way thereunto.

Self-applauding, self-seeking, in matter of praise and honour before men, I strive against. I desire to be as sincere to another's reputation, as to my own. I would not value others by their regard to me, but by their true worth. I would be contented to be little in the eyes of others. This I unfeignedly desire and endeavour, and I hope that I have it in some good degree.

All my omissions and negligences in the work of the ministry, in preaching, in personal private application, I bewail, and heartily resolve upon more diligence and faithfulness.

Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; but remember me, and spare me, according to thy great mercy in Christ Jesus, the great propitiation for sin, in whom I desire to be found, and under the covert of whose wings I stand, that I may be saved from thy wrath, and enjoy thy peace, and live in thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore!

WRITTEN IN 1679.

God will never damn, in hell, any soul that hath the habitual predominant love of God, though culpably remiss, and otherwise sinful; yea, hell and such love of God, are inconsistent.

I love the holy will of God with all my heart, and hate all disconformity to it. Nothing is more grievous to me than to displease God; and nothing is more pleasant to me than to please him.

I strive after Christian perfection.

I labour to be unbottomed of self, to die to self-advancement, to self-glorying, and to all selfish joys, and to live wholly in, and to God, and to have self swallowed up in the love of him.

I labour in the work of self-resignation, that my will may be confined to, and included in the will of God.

I strive after patience in its perfect work, and do find a willingness to yield to God's will in my chastisements. I still justify God, and do not entertain a hard thought of his dealing with me; but conclude, that it is altogether holy, just, and good, and for the best.

I feel my sin a greater burden to me than my affliction. I had rather have health of soul in a body full of pain, than health and ease of body with a distempered soul. And the sense of my great sinfulness disposeth me to patience, under my afflicting infirmities of body.

I narrowly watch my heart, that it may not lodge or admit a vain thought. When I am surprised with vanity, I suppress it as soon as I observe it.

I am very fearful of offending in a word. When on a sudden, and inadvertently, I have spoken a word, which upon second thoughts is doubtful to me, though I had not such doubt in the speaking of it; I have been much perplexed about it, and engaged myself to a greater watchfulness.

WRITTEN IN 1680.

SURELY Christ hath my heart. Whensoever I swerve from Christ in a thought, word, or deed, it is by inadvertency and surprisal, against my fixed principle; and I have great regret at it, and loathe myself for it.

If I were out of all fear of damnation, I had rather be holy than unholy; and I take pains, and use God's means to be holy in opposition to the flesh, and I make it my chief care. And I do this because I make the enjoying of God my chief good; and rather than lose the hope thereof, I would willingly undergo the sufferings of this life, which lead to that blessed fruition, not excepting the fiery trial itself.

I hope, when the end cometh, my God will say to me, "Dear child, thy warfare is accomplished, thine iniquity is pardoned, enter thou into my rest." Therefore, I will both hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of God. I will hope to the end. Strengthen me, O my God, that I faint not.

WRITTEN IN 1682.

I HAVE no design; I pursue nothing contrary to God's interest: but all my designs and pursuits are

for God and holiness. I think I am sure of this, if I be sure of any thing. My great aim, and care, and labour, is to cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

To whom I yield myself a servant to obey, his servant I am: but I do not yield myself a servant to sin, to obey it; but I do yield myself a servant to God, to obey him. The design and business of my life is to do his will.

PART II.

The workings of my Heart in my Affliction.

WRITTEN IN 1680.

THE will of God in laying this affliction upon me, I unfeignedly approve as holy, just, and good: and I am unfeignedly willing to bear the affliction, as it is an evil laid upon me by his will, till the time come in which he thinks fit to remove it.

I watch, and pray, and strive, that I may not give way to a repining thought against his holy hand. In this point the "spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." My mind doth really consent to God's dispensation, and to my submission, as being most agreeable to his wise and gracious government, and most conducing to my salvation. But my sensitive part, and my mind also, as it is in part unrenewed, weak, and sinful, doth greatly reluctate; so that I

am put hard to it, and I must say, " I am willing, Lord, help my unwillingness."

I have not observed in the several days past, that a thought of direct or positive discontent, or vexatious commotion of mind, hath been admitted by me; nevertheless, I see to my grief, that I fall exceeding short of that quietness, content, and cheerfulness in my condition, and of that freeness of self-resignation to God's will, that I desire, and his goodness calls for.

I wrestle with God by importunate prayer, that this thorn in the flesh might depart from me; that this distemper might be removed, or so mitigated, that I might be in some comfortable ease, and get a more cheerful freedom in doing my duty. Yet I would not wrest this relief out of his hands unseasonably, and without his good-will and his blessing. I would wait his time, and desire to have it with his love and favour, and with a saving benefit.

My earnest desire of deliverance is limited with submission to his holy will. Yet I find that this submission is no easy matter, but that I must take pains with my own heart; and that it is God who must work my heart to it, and keep under the flesh, which is always ready to rebel. It is hard to be willing to bear my wearisome condition: and, O how weak is my heart, and ready to sink if it be not upheld by a strength above my own! O let his grace be sufficient for me, and let his power be made perfect in my weakness.

I feel myself better in the inner-man for this chastening. It hath furthered mortification and self-denial, and done much to the breaking of the

heart of pride, and to bring me towards that more perfect self-examination for which I labour.

It hath much deadened the world to me, and my desire to the world. It makes me know in earnest the emptiness of all creatures, and how great my concern is in God. It drives me close to him, and makes me to fetch all my comforts from him.

I see of how little value all outward things are towards true contentment; and not only in my present afflicted state, but if I were at ease and in full prosperity. The sense of this benefit to my soul, is the great means of bringing my will to that weak degree of submission to God's will, to which I have attained.

O that I could live more by faith, in this trying affliction. I endeavour to impress upon my soul those arguments which the Scripture affords for patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. But this will not do the work, unless the spirit of faith and patience be given from him, from whom comes down every good and perfect gift.

I pray, I cry to my Father, that he would give me the Holy Spirit, according to his gracious promise, that I might show forth the power of his grace, and that I might not dishonour him, nor discourage his children, nor reproach religion by my weakness. And in my bearing of it well, my reputation is nothing regarded by me in comparison of the honour of Christ. Him I desire to glorify both in my obedience and patience.

I do not love God the less, because of his correcting hand upon me. As my necessities drive me, so his love draws me, and my love brings me to him. I look to him as my Father: and shall I not

honour my Father, and give him reverence, when I am chastened of him? The Lord is my portion, saith my soul: therefore will I hope in him, I will wait for the Lord, who hideth his face; I will look after him; he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Therefore he will turn again, and have compassion upon me.

If he kill me, I will put my trust in him: for he will not cast me off for ever, if I cleave to him with faith unfeigned; but even through death itself will he save me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

When I say, What shall I do, in case of such or such troublesome or dangerous consequences? my heart answers, Be not careful, God will provide; I will leave it to him.

Besides a natural desire of ease and rest, the sense of the temptation to which I am liable in this condition makes me importunate to be delivered from it. I feelingly know the weakness of my own heart, and I am not ignorant of the devil's malice and subtlety, and how he will make the fiercest assaults where I am weakest. Whereupon I tremble in myself, for fear of being tempted, and shaken, and greatly amazed. And upon this ground, respecting my soul's safety, I judge an humble and patient importunity with God, for the removing and moderating of my distemper, to be my duty.

Yet to keep me from being over-solicitous and anxious in this thing, I consider, that God doth govern and limit all our temptations, and will not "suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will, with the temptation, open a way for us to escape."

Nevertheless, I find, that I do much offend by too great a vehemence of desire to be delivered from this grievous burden, without due submission; also by too much disquietness and dejection, when after some expectation of a benefit by that means, I perceive that my hope thereof is like to be frustrated. The Lord help me to carry it better, and as I ought to do, and keep my mind in its right frame!

My business under this affliction is to be careful about my own part, and to leave God's part to his care. My part is to do my duty, and to get the benefit of the affliction; but to remove it, is God's part. Let me perform what belongs to me, and what belongs to God he will certainly perform in his own time and way.

The sum of my duty is humbly to comply with the dispensation, and to behave myself suitably to it, and to please and honour God under it. Accordingly, in this I labour, and in this way I seek for comfort. And first I justify God and judge myself. God exercises his own holiness and justice in this chastisement.

His justice and holiness I approve, and accept the punishment of mine iniquity, and exercise a hatred of the sin for which I now smart.

I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, and I repent with a self-abhorrence; and I lie in the dust at his feet, and wait on him, until that he have mercy upon me, and I am glad to receive mercy upon his terms.

I have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is set before me. I do most heartily take God for my portion, and I had rather live the divine life

in conformity to him, and fellowship with him, here in the first-fruits of the Spirit, and hereafter in the fulness of glory, than live in the fulness of the delights that belong to the natural life upon earth, in a way of sin, and alienation from the life of God.

I do most heartily take Christ according to the offer of the Gospel, not only to be justified from my sins, and delivered from the wrath to come, by his merits; but also to be sanctified by his word and Spirit, and to be governed by his laws, and to be brought by him unto the aforesaid fellowship with God. And my life and practice, in the main bent and ordinary course thereof, is according to this choice, in a daily walking not by sight and sense, but by faith; not after the flesh, but after the spirit, in setting my heart not on earthly, but on heavenly things.

I cast off vain desires and hopes, and my expectations of good are from God, according to the tenour of his promises. When I walk in darkness, and see no light of outward comfort, human helps, and visible means, I will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God.

I strive with my own spirit, to subdue it to the will of God: and in whatsoever I am tempted to be most impatient, therein I labour most for patience. My great care is, that I may not sin against my God in any kind; and more especially, that I may not sin by a rebellious impatience under his correcting hand.

In this present distress I look upon myself as being upon my trial; and therefore I look more diligently to my behaviour in it. Now a price is put

into my hand for the proof of my sincerity, and I labour accordingly to make good proof of it.

I am willing to serve God in pain and patience, else I were unworthy of so good a master. I am willing to be conformable to Christ in suffering, else I were unworthy of him. But here I must say again, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak; Lord, help my unwillingness."

I am called to deny all the pleasures of sense, and to mind them no more; and I am heartily willing of it. I am called to declare to others, by the exercise of faith and patience, the righteousness of the Lord, and his tender mercies, and great faithfulness, and that he alone is all-sufficient. O that the power of his grace may be thus magnified in me!

This is the fruit of affliction that I look after; and in this I will labour more and more. And through the help of divine grace, I will not doubt of a good issue, while I am found in the way of duty. "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God, who cannot lie, hath promised to give eternal life."

I am desirous to be delivered from this affliction (if it be the will of the Lord) upon this account, that I might have a more clear proof of my freer choosing of God for my portion, when I am not thus driven to him, as now, because I can go no where else for comfort; also of my freer turning from the world, even then when I am capable of enjoying it. To have such a proof of these things in myself, I should take for a great advantage, and be greatly thankful. Nevertheless, for quieting of my mind,

I consider that my present afflicted state doth better secure me from temptations, which might draw my heart from God to the love of the world; in which respect, prosperity is far more dangerous than adversity.

Moreover, my present state gives me advantage for a higher proof of the grace that is in me, and of the power of the divine aid, upholding me in a life of faith and patience, by which I live upon God alone, when worldly comfort fails me; and by which I am enabled to overcome things grievous to nature; and to get above, not only the pleasures, but the sharp pains of sense; and to live, and endure with little natural or bodily rest.

Also it gives me the advantage of exercising a resolved, willing self-resignation to God in this dispensation, which is harsh to flesh and blood; and a resting in hope, when there is no present appearance of help; and a waiting and looking for the Lord, who hides his face; and a cleaving to him by constant love, though he doth sore bruise me.

If I continue in the exercise of these graces, they will give me a good proof, that the heavenly nature is in me, and will make way for great assurance towards God, and full consolation in Jesus Christ.

And yet further: I trust that I have, long before this distress, chosen God for my portion, and drawn off my heart from the flattering vanities of this world. And I know, that in this distress, I do not come to him constrainedly, or merely as driven.

I delight to draw nigh to him, to pour out my heart before him in prayer and meditation. My

meditation of him is sweet to my soul, and I do not love to be diverted from it. And when my distemper is any whit more easy, it works unto a rejoicing in him. And it is for an enlargement of heart towards him that I chiefly desire bodily ease and rest.

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer! I will cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!

God, the infinite goodness and love, will not cast off a poor soul that lies at his foot, and cries for the help of his grace, when he is ready to sink under the burden, and is willing to have mercy upon his terms.

Therefore I will still cry to him, and look for him, and lean upon him, and will not depart from him by an evil heart of unbelief. This I resolve in his strength. Lord, strengthen me unto the perfect work of patience!

Lord, I heartily consent that thou shouldest use me as thou pleasest, so thou use me as one of those that love thy name! Disposal is an effect of propriety, but it is always a regular and a loving disposal of the subjects of his government! O deal favourably with thy servant! Thou knowest my frame; remember that I am but dust!

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Forsake not the works of thine own hands! O Lord, without thee I can do nothing. Therefore I must beg, that thou wilt give grace sufficient; without which I cannot subsist: for therein is the life of my spirit.

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven!

Pity me, O Lord, as a father pitieth his children!

Comfort me, O Lord, as one whom his mother comforteth!

The Lord will wait, that he may be gracious unto you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Can I be in a better hand? As my professed judgment is concerning God's proceeding, so let me stand affected towards it.

PART III.

Notes for Himself.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Entertain not a sensual imagination for a moment.

Never expect any thing from the world; and when it offers thee any thing that is good for thee, receive it: but catch not at it greedily.

Be always mindful what thou mayest do for thine own and others' salvation, in every instance, and upon every occasion.

Die daily.

In arguing with another, watch against every inordinate heat of passion, loud speaking, and every rash word.

Any matter of trial to thee, reckon among thy gains.

Take no delight of sense, but in a manifest and

direct subserviency to spiritual ends; and use not that delight to irritate, but to allay sensuality.

When a sensual imagination or passion breaks in, then excite the taste of the powers of the world to come; and delay not to recover the divine frame.

What thou doubtest, do not.

In thy actions, consider not only what is lawful, but what is best in the present circumstances; and do that.

When thou art in company, where the talk is but vain, watch to put in a word, that may be to edification.

If any despise thee, do not bear a grudge against him for it. And be not offended with any, merely because they do not honour thee.

When thou art framing excuses, take heed of speaking an untruth, or approaching near to it: lest in avoiding the offence of man, thou make too bold with God. Take heed of this also, when thou wouldest speak pleasingly, and avoid offence in speaking.

Use no recreations or delight of sense, but what thou canst at that very time desire of God, that it may be sanctified to spiritual ends.

When thou hearest that another hath spoken any thing to thy injury or disparagement, beware of a transport of anger, that thou speak not harshly or unadvisedly against him, or too passionately for self, or as too much concerned for self.

Watch against all secret pleasure in the lessening of another for advancing thyself.

Pray heartily for the success of others, who perform the same service that thou art engaged in.

And rejoice in whatsoever good is done by them, as in what is done by thyself, and own it before men.

Use not animosity and contention in any matter that may be brought to a good issue in the way of peace.

Engage not hastily as a party in a difference between others, but reserve thyself impartial and unengaged, that thou mayest moderate between them.

Whilst thou lamentest thy weakness in some cases, and seekest more strength, be sure to use that greater strength in all other cases, whereunto thou hast attained; and be not remiss or forgetful in any duty that is more easy to thee: so shalt thou have comfort in thy willing mind, and do much towards the attainment of that which thou yet wantest, and reachest after.

In the time of prayer, let no business that is not of present necessity divert thee from it.

When thou hast an opportunity of speaking a word for the good of another's soul, defer not the doing of it till another time.

Watch against all bitter and passionate speeches, against malignant opposers of truth. For meekness of spirit and behaviour, is more according to Christ, than wrathful zeal.

In thy zeal against the sins of others, be mindful of thy own exceeding sinfulness: call to remembrance thy great offences, which, though they be unfeignedly repented of, give thee to understand what cause thou hast to be meek and humble, and patient toward all men.

Watch against the motions of pride and hypocrisy, in the presence of any person whose favour and opi-

nion thou much esteemest. What is man that thou shouldest pass to be judged by man's judgment, or seek applause from man!

Be not discomposed about some petty absurdities of behaviour, or little indecorums, or oversights; for so to be, is pusillanimity.

When thou hast conceived a dislike of any person, his ways, or actions, or dost ill resent his carriage towards thee; take heed thou do not take any secret pleasure in the foresight of evil coming upon him; or in hearing or observing any such folly of his as tends to his reproach or ruin, or notable damage.

If thou hast forespoken the calamity, or any evil, that in reason is like to befal one, who doth unadvisedly manage himself, and his affairs; take heed of wishing or willing that the evil should come to pass, lest thy judgment or foresight should seem to be disparaged; yea, take heed of any motion rising towards such a wish or will.

My own exceeding faultiness engages me, in seeing and hearing the faults and follies of others, to pity them, rather than to rejoice or glory over them; and to cover or lessen those faults, rather than to aggravate or display them.

The mercy and forgiveness that I have found, and hope for at the Lord's hand, engages and disposes me to forgive injuries and abuses done to me. And I should not think it much, that I, who am so sinful, should bear some abuses from men.

It is displeasing to me, to hear the faults of others insisted on, whether they be matters of folly and inconsiderateness, or of perverseness and malice; but especially if the matter be not evident.

I find that petty damages and injuries are apt to be vexatious, especially in a matter the whole whereof is but little; as in a little farm or living. Wherefore I endeavour that I be not surprised with a troublesome appearance, and consider the moment of a thing how light it is.

Abhor every thought, word, and deed, which is contrary to love, and tends to the hurt of others.

The more men wrong thee, the more watchfully maintain thy love towards them.

After thy public ministrations in prayer and preaching, be not thoughtful or much concerned how men like thy performance; but be concerned for this, how acceptable it is to God, and how effectual and successful to holy and saving means.

If God single me out for special great suffering, I have no reason to judge amiss of it: for such is the state of the things in the world to come, that some individuals must of necessity suffer for the good of the people. And why not I, as well as another? God is my owner, and he may do with me, as with any other, even as he pleaseth; and he is my Father, and he will use me well, and make me sufficient amends for all my suffering; and I shall be no loser, but an exceeding gainer thereby in the end.

In this present state of trial, it is requisite that there be a sufficient difficulty and hardship for all those that shall be saved to grapple with.

For all our boasts of free-will; unless there were some heavy weights of sufferings cast by Providence into the balance, to poise against our propensions to follow lusts, and pleasures, and worldly allurements,

we should never seriously set ourselves to the severe and self-denying duties which belong to true godliness.

To avoid inconveniences to thyself, expose not any to danger whose safety thou art bound to provide for.

In all accusations, whether public or private, when thou hast made a sufficient defence, enter not into needless matters for ostentation, or such further vindication as is not necessary.

I will never wilfully do amiss, by commission or omission, in a greater or lesser matter, because I shall too often do amiss, at least in smaller matters, through ignorance, or inadvertency, or surprisal of passion, do what I can.

Remember thou hast nothing of thine own, but all is the Lord's; and accordingly use all that thou hast to no carnal interest, but to serve him, as being wholly devoted to him.

Be as serious and hearty in thy prayer to God for the concerns of others, as for thine own.

Watch against selfishness, lest it work unto great uncharitableness.

When thou hast evidences of thy sincerity, which cannot in reason be gainsaid, hold to them, and take comfort in them; yet still endeavour by reviews, and further searchings, to clear all more and more.

We keep our evidences, by keeping our graces in their lively exercise.

Fetch thy comforts from heaven, and not from pleasures and hopes here below.

Do not overvalue any worth that is in thyself; but think it rather less than it is indeed.

If any slight thee, be neither dejected nor provoked.

Do not value men according to their esteem of thee, but according to their true worth.

Watch against the expectation of hearing thy own praise; and when such a thought arises, instantly suppress it.

When thou art commended, let not thy thoughts dwell on it with delight; but let it be to thee as nothing.

Take heed of too great a valuation of thine own work, or usefulness in thy place; and lay not too great a stress thereon.

When friends out of love overvalue thee, it concerns thee not to overvalue thyself; nor to take more than thy due, though they give it.

Have a habit of compassion towards the afflicted firmly fixed in thee, that the motions thereof may be suitably stirred up on every occasion.

Let an abhorrence of any content in another's sufferings be deeply imprinted on thee; that every thought thereof may be prevented or instantly suppressed: yea, hate all disregard to another's misery.

Watch against all eagerness, and immoderate delight in eating and drinking; and against minding any kind of food for the pleasing of the sense. Come to thy meals not like a brute, but as becomes a saint. Never terminate in the sensitive pleasure, but make use of it to raise thy heart to God.

When thou hast eaten so much, so that thou thinkest more is not expedient, or is better forborne than taken, proceed not to a bit more, lest thou be entangled or disturbed.

Still consider, Is this act I go about agreeable to one that hath communion with God? Will this act promote communion with God? Do I come to this act so as to have communion with God thereby promoted?

Seek the lawful contentment of any that are about thee, as thou dost thy own; and be as glad to gratify them as thyself, so far as it is convenient for them. Hate and shun all motions of unworthy selfishness: and see that others be sharers with thee in thy pleasant things, and be not content to have them to thyself alone.

Always mind, and do the present duty. Comply with the present dispensation, and make the most of it. Thy business is to please God, and God will provide for thy comfort.

Lay thy heart to rest in the will of God. For there is no other rest for the soul to be thought on.

I will not be earnest with God for any good but what is included in the covenant of grace. I will expect no good but according to the tenour of that covenant, which is all my salvation, and all my desire.

I am resolved that pride shall not set me to study, or preach, or pray, or carry me on in any service. If thoughts of man's applause, steal in with my honest intentions, I will instantly cast them out, as soon as they be discovered, and I will watch and pray to prevent them. I will watch, when I go forth in my service for God, that pride do not send me forth: that men's opinion may be nothing with me, but that the pleasing God, and doing good, be my whole scope.

In performing prayer, I consider, that a due regard to expressions for men's sake, that they be affecting and not offensive, is not faulty but necessary; and therefore must be heeded. And I think, that my thoughts about men's judging have this good effect, that my expressions be not offensive; yet I am jealous of the mixture of corruption and vanity.

I earnestly endeavour to have my heart so filled with the apprehension of God's infinite majesty, and my infinite concern in him, that all impertinent thoughts may be quite swallowed up. All designing and endeavouring to please men for my own praise, I do at that very time detest and abandon; yea, at that very time I am sure I do very little regard either the approbation and praise, or the disapprobation and dispraise of those very persons, about whom my thoughts are apt to run out as aforesaid. I do my utmost to prevent, restrain, and suppress all such thoughts; they are a burden to me, and I hope that the merciful God will not impute them to me, to the rejecting of my prayer, or to any breach between him and me.

If God approve my service, and own me in it, I shall be abundantly satisfied; though men (whatsoever or how many soever they be) should despise and loathe it. On the contrary, if men should never so highly approve, I can never be satisfied if God do not accept and bless it. This I am sure of, if I be sure of any thing.

I discern, that by care I have brought it to that pass, that my thoughts of others present with me in prayer, are not with regard to their praise, which I

value not; but to what is fit to be done by me in that service, and to their being affected with it.

I find I am prone to be anxiously scrupulous; yet I should consider that there be inevitable weaknesses (as impertinent thoughts) accompanying the best performances.

DEVOUT BREATHINGS

OF A

PIOUS SOUL.

DEVOUT BREATHINGS

OF A

PIOUS SOUL.

LORD, what am I, in myself? Dust and ashes formed from nothing. I am nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. But, what am I as a sinner? An infinitely criminal enemy of God, my Maker, my Preserver, and Redeemer, whose heart is full of hatred and malice, and my life filled up with rebellion against him. My heart is the very reverse of all the excellency that is in God; my life a presumptuous trampling on all the authority, and an ungrateful contempt and abuse of all the kindness of God? Ah, my heart! thou art the quintessence of all evil, harder than a flinty rock, more loathsome than a noisome carcase, more rotten than a long dead corse, more noxious than a pestilential pit or unripe grave, more mischievous than a tyger or scorpion, more ugly than a monster, more proud, deceitful, and desperately wicked than a devil. Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?

2. Where sin abounded, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, might have justly for ever abounded. Had I been in hell these many years, I had but received the due reward of my deeds. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. I have done all that I can to dishonour and destroy God; and God doth all he can to save and exalt me. Grace, how undeserved! how unasked! how refused and trampled on by me! but how dear to God! how strong! how unbounded in God! By the grace, the free favour of God, I am what I am. By his forbearing grace, I am out of hell. By his saving grace, I am on my way to heaven. By grace I was chosen in Christ. By grace I am redeemed to God by the blood of Christ. By grace I am one spirit with Christ. By grace I am pardoned, reconciled, and accepted in Christ. By grace I am a child and heir of God in Christ. By grace I am quickened and sanctified in Christ. By grace I am preserved and comforted in Christ. And by grace I shall be quickly glorified with and in Christ.—What is this! Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!—Grace, grace unto it.

3. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ." Who is this Christ? Immanuel, God with us; the eternal Son of God, become man, and continued to be both God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever. What is Christ? He is ALL and IN ALL, and ALL IN ALL to me. I am a lost sinner; Christ is my Saviour. I am destitute, enslaved, and miserable; Christ is my Redeemer. I am an enemy to, and rebel against God; Christ is the Mediator be-

tween God and me. I am a bankrupt, infinitely indebted to God's law and justice; Christ is my Surety, that paid all my debt. I am infinitely guilty before God; Christ is my atoning priest, sacrifice and ransom. I am ignorant; Christ is my instructing Prophet. I am stubborn and rebellious; Christ is my all-subduing king. I am a lost sheep; Christ is my shepherd. I am destitute; Christ is my friend. I am forsaken; Christ is my husband. I am blind and darkened; Christ is my light. I am naked; Christ is my white raiment. I am disobedient; Christ is my righteousness. I am polluted; Christ is my sanctification,—my fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. I am grieved; Christ is my comfort. I am poor; Christ is my wealth. I am diseased; Christ is my physician. I am dead; Christ is my life. I am dying; Christ is my portion for ever.—If I look through my Bible, Christ fills every page. Christ is the end of every genealogy; the centre of every history; the fulfilment of every law; the substance of every promise; the exemplification of every doctrine; and the accomplishment of every prophecy. If I look through the creation, I see Christ the maker, Christ the preserver, Christ the end, Christ the centre and glory of all things. I see thousands of them bright emblems of my Christ. O my soul, art thou also full of Christ?

4. Could I exercise myself in the prayer and meditation of faith, how much of Christ, God, and grace, might I know and enjoy! These, like the believing spies, would daily bring me home some of the fairest and sweetest fruits of heaven. Medita-

tion, as an eye, views our mercies; prayer, as a hand, cuts off and brings them home. Meditation, like a factor, lies abroad, to look out and collect what we want; and prayer, like a ship, goes forth and brings home what we desire. It is my misery, that I cannot here live without wants; but of God's mercy I cannot be so miserable, as not to be supplied. Meditation cannot find out a real want, but prayer will bring in an answerable comfort. Meditation cannot perceive a sweetness, fulness, or excellency in Christ, but prayer will make me a partaker of it. If then mercy, if Christ be so full and free, I will never have a want without studying to know it, and never know it, without praying for the supply of it. Nay, I will never rest, till God do more for me than I can either ask or think.

5. Eagles are said to gaze much on the radiant beams of the sun. Let me, by believing contemplation, still view the glorious beams of Jesus the Sun of Righteousness, and be conversant about the high and profitable things of eternal salvation. Let me build my nest on the rock of ages, and by the altar, the throne of God. Let me penetrate into every garden of God, and suck honey from every flower of paradise. By such meditation, I can behold and converse with God, solace myself in the bosom of my beloved Redeemer, bathe myself in rivers of pleasures, tread the paths of my rest, and view the mansions, thrones, and crowns of my eternity. Why then, my soul, shouldst thou nestle in, and pore on this dunghill world, this wilderness of trouble? Get thee up to the mount, and behold Jesus thy king, in his beauty, the glory of his per-

son, the fulness of his righteousness, and the riches of his grace;—and the land of promise that is afar off. Let my thoughts and heart be where my treasure, my expected happiness is.—Though my habitation be on earth, let my conversation be in heaven, whence I look for my Saviour.

6. What art thou, O my soul? A spiritual essence, an incorporeal substance, the very breath of God, and an epitome of heaven. What satisfies thee, O my immortal soul? Nothing but the immortal, the infinite, the redeeming God, in whom all fulness dwells, and who fills heaven and earth.—Creatures, being all insufficient, may fill thee with vexation, but the all-sufficient God alone can fill thee with contentment. Lord, as no action of mine can please thee without myself, so no creature of thine can satisfy me without thyself. Take therefore my heart, and give me thyself. My very heart and flesh cry out for God, the living God.

7. What, my soul, dost thou want? What excellency or advantage dost thou wish? Is it beauty? Christ is fairer than the sons of men, white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand,—altogether lovely; for how great is his beauty! And in him the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of heaven, and the wise as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.—Is it wealth? Christ is rich in mercy; he is the riches of the glory of the gospel; and with him are durable riches and righteousness. "We know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." Wealth and riches are in his house.

Every child in his family shall have a rich, a glorious, an incorruptible, and eternal inheritance among his saints. God is their portion for ever.—Is it honour? Jesus and his work are honourable and glorious. He is Jehovah's king of glory, the God-man, whom he delighteth to honour. And what an honour to be a spouse of Christ and favourite of God,—and to wear crowns of righteousness, life, and glory—a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?—Is it pleasure? Christ is fair, yea, pleasant; God's Son, his Elect, in whom his soul delighteth. "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." The righteous shall enter into the joy of their Lord.—Wouldst thou have a confluence of all the glorious things in heaven and on earth? Christ is ALL and IN ALL. In him dwells all the fulness of the new covenant—all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; in him godliness hath the promises of this life, and of that which is to come. Let me then first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the excellencies of heaven and earth shall be added unto me. Lord, let me be righteous and holy in Christ, and then I shall soon be happy in and with him.

8. Wise agents fix their ends before they begin their work, and then direct their actions to that end, which they proposed. Mariners launch, that they may arrive at the distant port, and direct their course accordingly. Christians should always have one eye on their end, and the other on their way. A man lives like a brute, that knows not what he lives for; and he acts like a fool, who aims at heaven, and

lives at random. A wise Christian aims at so living as he may live for ever, and therefore labours to spend his life in walking in those paths in which he sees heaven before him. Dost thou, my soul, aim at the full and everlasting enjoyment of God in Christ? Be then, even while present in this body, alway looking to Jesus, alway drawing near to God, alway holding fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; so shalt thou quickly be where he is, see him as he is, and come near unto him, even to his seat.

9. How many envy rich worldlings for what they have! Let me rather pity them for what they want. He hath a talent, but it wants improvement; he hath a lamp, but it wants oil; he hath a soul, but it wants grace; he hath a star, but he wants the sun; he hath the creature, but he wants the Creator. In his life he floats upon a torrent of vanity, which runs out into an ocean of vexation of spirit. In his death he enters into utter darkness, and hath his soul set a-drift for ever in an impetuous lake of fire and brimstone. No silver can anchor him; no gold can land him; and no friends can comfort him. Lord, rather give me misery, than such happiness as ends so ill. Give me Christ and his grace, and what thou pleasest beside. Rather make me poor with a renewed heart, and a holy life, than rich with a bad conscience.

10. I am frail, and this world is fading; but my soul is immortal, and God is eternal. If I pitch on creatures for my portion, either they will soon take wings and fly away to accuse me to God for misimproving them, or my soul must take its flight from

them, and go to hell. But if I choose God in Christ for my portion, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and everlasting glory shall crown me when I die. Let me, therefore, now leave that which I shall soon lose; and by faith embrace and follow after that which I shall for ever enjoy. And if wicked men have their heaven here, and their hell hereafter,—and good men have their hell here, and heaven hereafter, let me never envy the prosperity of the wicked, nor be offended at the affliction of the righteous, seeing the one is drawn in pomp to hell, while the other swims in tears to heaven.

11. There is a sad mirth and a joyful mourning. Behold the voluptuous man; laughter appears in his face, but sadness centres in his heart; his carnal delights are not only vain, but vexing. While the banquet lasts, he sings; but when the reckoning comes, his spirit sinks; his candle goes out in a stinking snuff, and his shining sun sets in a watery cloud. Thus, "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." But the tears of the true penitent are the joy of angels, the comfort of the weeper, and a spring-well of lasting, nay, everlasting consolation. To mourn for sin, is to weep for joy. Why then do wicked men think or speak, as if grace and holiness were the tomb of joy and pleasure, and impiety the womb to bring forth felicity. My soul hath felt both; and I find such damps of spirit in worldly pleasures, and such refreshing of soul in the deep of godly sorrow, that I shall ever esteem one drop of such spiritual joy better than an ocean of their carnal mirth. Not-

withstanding my jovial temper, I never knew what true joy and pleasure were, till I found them in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

12. My soul, where lies thy happiness? If thou place it in any creature,—if, with Judas, thou canst be content to keep the bag, or with Reuben, to dwell on this side Jordan;—if thou canst be put off with a breath of honour, a blaze of pleasure, a snare of wealth, or a parcel of vanity, take thy fill, and look for no more from God. Thou seest thy portion, thine *all;* take it, and go thy way. But when the breath is expired, the blaze extinct, and thou art for ever insnared, what an eternity must thou spend in bewailing thy folly? But if I place my happiness in the highest excellency,—in Jesus and Jehovah, as given and secured to me in the new covenant, " this God shall be my God for ever, and my guide even unto death; when my heart and my flesh fail, God shall be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Since I am made capable of such heavenly excellencies, let me never be put off with transitory vanities. Let my happiness lie in God himself; and let me take whatever I enjoy beside myself, as a blessing, but not as a portion.

13. Unsatiable desires in temporals make a man poor in spirituals. A Christian is only rich in outward things, when he is content with what he hath. —that man hath nothing of heavenly things, that does not thirst after more. Worldly desires alway leaves us empty. Either we get not that which we covet, or we are not satisfied with it; but he that thirsteth after heavenly things, is always filled, and

the more he receives, the more he desires. Believing desires fetch in the richest and choicest mercies that God can give. Why then do we not turn all our affections and desires toward heavenly objects? How many excellent mercies lie aground for want of a tide of such desires to bring them in? Why then should I beggar myself by thirsting after creatures, when I might soon become rich, by desiring Christ and his grace?

14. When a rich worldling dies, alas! his sleep is ended, and his dream lost. Awaking in eternity, he hath nothing in his hand. His golden heap is gone; but the rust of it attends to witness against him. His mammon fails him; but the unrighteousness of it follows him. Others have now the use of it, but he carries the abuse of it to the tribunal of God, and to hell in his conscience. He hath enriched his friends, but he hath undone himself.—Every bag, every house, every ridge, he left behind, is the price of his blood, his soul's damnation. Let me never treasure up the price of blood. If Christ hath made me his steward, let me give what I have, and need not, to his poor members that need, and have not. So transitory creatures, when they slide away, shall not carry me with them; but when I go away, I shall carry them with me.

15. Lord, what a miserable creature is a wicked man! His very mercies make him miserable. Though his estate be large, either he hath not the benefit of enjoying, but the danger of keeping it; or, if he enjoy it, he so miserably abuseth it, as that his temporal use of it issueth in his eternal punishment. The pleasures of it are quickly gone; but

the pain of it torments him for ever. Let me therefore have Christ and his new covenant mercies, and grace to improve temporal mercies, so as they may not enhance my misery.

16. If I would know whether my name be written in God's book of life, let me search what is written in my heart. If his word in the faith, power, and authority of it, be written in my conscience and heart, my name is enrolled in his book of election. But if nothing be now written in my conscience, but black lines of sins, I shall find nothing in God's book of judgment, but red lines of damnation. At the last day, when all books shall be opened, I will find either the sweetest or the sharpest lines in my own conscience. Having it therefore purged from dead works by Jesus' blood, let me labour to write in it such things as I may not be ashamed to read hereafter.

17. My soul, be not curious to search into the secrets of God. Pick not the lock, where he hath allowed no key. He that will view every cloud, may be smitten with a thunderbolt! and he that will be too familiar with God's secrets, may be overwhelmed in his judgments. By curious increase of his knowledge, Adam lost his holiness and happiness. By prying into the ark of God, fifty thousand of the Bethlehemites lost their lives. Let me never hover about this flame, lest it scorch my wings.—But, since God hath revealed to me as much as can avail to my sanctification and happiness, let me carefully improve myself by it, and never inquire into any thing which he hath reserved for himself. Till I have fully learned Christ, let me never waste my time on curiosities.

18. Nothing is more certain than death as to the event, and nothing more uncertain than the time of it. I may be too old to live, but can never be too young to die. I will therefore live every hour as if I were to die the next. And as the tree falls, so it must for ever lie. While death strikes down, God fixeth a man in eternal happiness or misery. If I enter this red sea an Israelite indeed, I shall have a safe landing in heaven, and be for ever compassed about with songs of deliverance. But if I enter it an uncovenanted Egyptian, I must sink like lead into the depths of hell. If I fall into this sleep with the oil of grace in my heart, I shall go in with Jesus the bridegroom. But if I lie down without grace, the gates of mercy will be shut against me for ever. This life is the time I must go forth to meet the Lord, and the hour in which I must work. In the other, I must be judged and rewarded according to my works. As I know not how soon I must fall asleep, let my care be, to be in Christ, and to live every day in God's sight, as I wish to appear in the last judgment. A double eternity hangs on our death.

19. Mariners are said to sail within four inches of death. Souls always dwell within four inches of eternity. If the ship splits, the sailor sinks. If our body burst in death, our soul plunges into a bottomless and bankless eternity. Alas! that so many should preposterously launch, before they know whether they shall sink or swim! It was a sad speech of a dying king, "That he was forced to die, before he had begun to live." Alas! how many men have their whole work for eternity to do,

when their hour of death is come?—their weapons to look for, when the enemy is in the gate?—their grace to seek, when death is at the door?—their oil to buy, when the bridegroom is come?—the city of refuge to begin thinking of, when the avenger of blood is upon them?—the seven years of plenty wasted, and nothing laid up for eternity? Let my first care be, to be in Christ and his covenant; and let me by his grace finish all my work, that at last I may have nothing to do but die.

20. Our world is now become so impudent in wickedness, that it is reckoned most shameful to be either afraid or ashamed of sin. But let me rather be the world's fool, than God's enemy. If Christ suffered both shame and torment for my sin, let me be ashamed and confounded for all that I have done, and loathe myself before God and men for all my iniquities and all my abominations. Must I be wicked if I be great? or, must I be undone, if I be good?

21. Worldlings are apt to mock at a Christian, who is melted by God's word, and trembles at a sin. But, how noble his courage! He can triumph in death and judgment, and over hell and the grave. As more than a conqueror in Christ, he can leave the world with a smile, "O death! where is thy sting? O hell! where is thy victory?" But worldling, though thou canst silence conscience and outface sin, how base a coward art thou! If trouble or death prey on thy vitals, or perhaps, but shake their hand at thee, what heaviness clouds thy looks? what terrors shake thy joints? What sadness sinks thy heart? A fancy frights thee; a shadow startles

thee. Nabal-like thy spirits die and sink within thee like a stone. Let me rather fear when God threatens, than fall when he judgeth. Let me be bold in Christ, but never bold in sin.

22. The nearer the moon draws unto her conjunction with the sun, the brighter she shines toward heaven, and the more darkly toward the earth. —The nearer a Christian lives to Christ, he is the comelier in the eyes of God, angels, and good men; but the more unlovely to a wicked world. He that is a precious and tender saint in God's account, will be a precise puritan or whimsical fanatic in the world's. How sad a sign, that thou art an Egyptian, when that cloud which is light to an Israelite is darkness to thee?—that thou art earthly, sensual, devilish, when thou seest no lustre in such celestial delights? Lord, if I shine to thee, I care not how dark I show to the world. Let me never be fair without, and an Ethiopian within.

23. It doth not now appear to the world what we Christians are, nor to ourselves what we shall be. For, did they know that we are the Jewels of God, the excellency of the creation, the beloved of Christ, they would not mock and persecute us as they do. Or if we but knew that we shall be glorified together with Christ, having his happiness as our happiness, his joy as our joy, his glories as our glories, we would not live so dejected as we do. When I consider, that my life is hid with Christ in God, I do not wonder that the world hates me; but when I consider, that Christ is my husband, my righteousness, my strength, my friend, my peace, my comfort, my ALL IN ALL, and that when he shall appear, I shall

appear with and like him in glory, I wonder that I am so much troubled with it.

24. Why should I fret myself at the prosperity of the wicked? Indeed, when I looked upon the spreading bay-tree, and forgot the withering blast, or viewed their delicious quails, and forgot their poisoning curse, my feet had almost slipt. But since I went into the sanctuary of God, and by faith searched his word, I find that all their glorious blossoms must soon fade under the blasts of his wrath, and that all their external felicity doth but perfect his judgments, and ripen them for larger measures of eternal torment. Their pleasure but deceitfully salutes them, while it stabs them under the fifth rib. Their honour, like Absalom's mule, only mounts and carries them to their gallows. Their riches, like Jael's present in a lordly dish, makes way for the fatal nail, a sad account to God, and a dreadful eternity. They flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever. They have a fat and large pasture, that they may be soon fitted for the slaughter. Thus their prosperity slays them. The fair day in which they ride to their execution, doth but add to their misery and shame.—If I therefore see a man prosper in his wickedness, let me not envy, but pity him. My united Christ, my possessed, my infallibly secured everlasting glory, renders me infinitely more happy than he, with all his abundance.

25. It is heaven to be for ever with the Lord Christ; and it is hell to be for ever without him. You that see no beauty in Christ, nor glory in heaven, do you likewise see no flames in hell, or hurt in the loss of God? You that cannot be taken

with his presence, O tremble at his absence. If you care not to be with him, fear to be for ever without him. By your "Depart from us," you make your hell on earth. And by his "Depart from me," he will make your hell when you leave this earth. Lord Jesus, thou art my heaven, my happiness, my God, and my portion for ever. So unite and bind me to thyself, that I may be forever with thee.

26. The good of riches lies altogether in their use. If this box of ointment be not broken and poured out for the refreshment of Jesus Christ in his distressed members, it loseth its worth. The true motto of a covetous man's rusting heaps of gold, is, Good for nothing. He is not rich that lays up much, but that lays out much. It is all one not to have, and not to use. Having therefore Christ and all the fulness of God for my treasure, let me labour to become rich by charitable laying out for him, while worldlings become poor by covetous hoarding up.—Their wealth, like apples of Sodom, perishes at the touch.

27. Who will willingly part with his God? I will rather part with my life than with my God. No marvel then, that the covetous man so holds and hugs his gold. It is his god. And if he lose it, what hath he more? His heaven, his happiness, his all is gone. Let me not therefore wonder at the closeness of his hand in keeping the god which he hath chosen, but at the mad folly of his heart in choosing a god which he cannot keep. And thou, my infinite all, keep thou me for ever, that I may keep thee, hold thee, and never let thee go.

28. O my soul! thine essence being spiritual, thy

desires immense, and thy nature immortal, thou canst enjoy no full content, no real satisfaction, unless in that which is a spiritual, unbounded, and everlasting good. Were therefore the whole world turned into a pleasant Eden, refreshed with living waters of immortality, and thou seated in the throne of its choicest excellencies, and crowned with its highest felicities, having the whole material creation as thy property and subjects, and thy revenues flowing in from every airth, how could a material world suit an immaterial soul? How could a soul be satisfied with dust? Could Satan extract the spirits and quintessence of all the excellencies under heaven, yet there would be more lees than wine, more thorns than flowers, more smoke than fire, more sting than honey. What whirlwind of vexation then should fill that soul which should attempt to be satisfied with such scanty, such mingled perfection? Nay, suppose they could constitute unbounded perfection, what could it avail without perpetual duration? They fly away like a bird, and melt like ice before the sun, and so leave the immortal soul restless and miserable, to sink for ever. Let me then never attempt to rest but in a redeeming, a reconciled God, who is the Father of Spirits, the fountain of life, the infinite good, the everlasting all. He alone is an adequate object for my immortal soul. The rest of the creatures is in their end; and the end of a soul is its God. Therefore, Lord, since thou hast made, hast redeemed me, for thyself, fill me fully with thyself, or take me wholly to thyself.

29. How vain this world! If Satan tempt thee by its pleasures, profits, or honours, my soul, stand

upon thy guard, and gird on thy strength. Think, what can the world profit me, if its cares choke me? How can pleasures comfort me, if their sting poison, torment, and kill me? What advancement is there in triumphing before men here, and trembling for shame before the throne of God hereafter? What are all earthly delights to the peace of my conscience through Jesus' blood, or that joy in the Holy Ghost? What are the applauses of men to the praise of God, and the crown prepared by him? What is the gain of a whole world to the loss of my soul? Having therefore received the Lord Jesus, let me press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in him; and seek for the pleasures, profits, and honours, which endure for ever.

30. Black clouds make travellers mend their pace, and mind their home; whereas fair days and a pleasant way waste their time, and steal away their affections in the prospect of the country. It is my mercy, that clouds of adversity often hide my sun, and eclipse my comforts. If I should find too much friendship in my inn in my pilgrimage, I would soon forget my Father's house, and my heritage. Let me always travel in Christ as my way, and in order to know and enjoy myself and my God.

31. Multitudes will praise and adore the saints in heaven, and yet mock and afflict the saints on earth. They persecute their persons, and garnish their sepulchres; embalm dead saints, and wound living ones; praise God for those that are departed in the faith, and yet persecute God in those that will not depart from the faith. Ah, foolish world! must thou condemn thyself; for thy praise leaves thy

practice without excuse. Let me love all saints for Christ's sake, in hopes that I shall live with them for ever.

32. Alexander being asked where he would lay his treasure; answered, among his friends; being confident, that there it would be kept with safety, and returned with interest. My soul, since Jesus, hoping for nothing again, hath bestowed on me, his enemy, his infinite treasures of eternal salvation, let not me enlarge my barns, but make the friends, the pupils of Christ, my treasury; let the hands of the widow and fatherless, and the bowels of the poor be my storehouse. Here it is sure; no thief can steal it, no time can rust it, no change can lose it: here a temporal gift is turned into an eternal reward. No ground is so fruitful as the bosom of the poor, which bringeth forth an hundred fold.

33. O my soul! why dost thou grovel on this earth? Every thing here is too base for thine excellency, too scanty for thy capacity, too transient for thine eternity. Thou are capable of enjoying God, and must have a being when these creatures shall be no more. They are all too base metal to make a crown of glory for thee, and too rotten a bottom to carry thee through eternity. Fill therefore thyself with Christ, and with all the fulness of God in him; so shalt thou raise thy dignity to an endless perpetuity.

34. Where any thing presents itself to be done, let me think, If Christ were now on earth, would he do it? Or, if I were now to die, would I do it? Constrained by his love, and enabled by his grace, I must walk as he hath walked, and live as I intend

to die. If it be not Christ's will, it is my sin; and if I die in that sin, it will be my ruin. Let me therefore, in every action, carry myself, as if Christ were on my one hand, and death on the other.

35. Our life is but a moment of time, and yet in it we sow the seeds of eternity. In this hour, I frame to myself either a good or a bad eternity. The thoughts that I now think, the words that I speak, and the works that I act, though they seem to rot, and be no more, shall spring up to eternity. According to our present carriage, our character and condition must rise or fall for ever. O what need of exactness, when every thing we do is to be marked in the records of eternity, and every line we draw must run parallel with eternity; and as we carry ourselves now, we must die or live for ever.—Lord Jesus, betroth me to thyself for ever; instate me in thy well-ordered, infallible, and everlasting covenant; clothe me with thine everlasting righteousness; save me in thyself with an everlasting salvation; so shall I, by thy grace, improve the shortness of my life, so as to turn this moment of misery into an eternity of blessedness.

36. The soul of man is the horizon of time and eternity. If the Sun of Righteousness be not risen in our horizon, what can we expect, but a clouded time, and a stormy eternity,—gross darkness here, and utter darkness hereafter? But if his oriental splendour be shed abroad into us, what celestial excellencies! what reviving comforts! what advancing principles are darted from his glorious countenance into our hearts! And in heaven, where he is in his full meridian in every soul, what full beams of

bliss and consolation, without the least shadow of bitterness and discontent, warm and delight them for ever? Lord Jesus, lift up the light of thy countenance on me, so shall time be the morning, and eternity the noontide of glory in my soul.

37. This world hath many servants, because it gives fair words and present wages: Christ hath but few disciples, because their reward is in the future life. Most live by sight, and therefore had rather, with Ishmael, be sent away with a small gift; take their portion in this life, than, with Isaac, wait for the inheritance reserved in the heavens.—They must have present pleasure, and wealth, or honour; and therefore, with Esau, sell their birth-right for one morsel of meat; and, with Lysimachus, lose their kingdom and themselves, for a draught of water. Few, like Moses, can despise the treasures of this present world, from respect to the recompence of future reward, or, like the disciples, leave a possession to live upon a promise. Lord, let me not have my portion in this life; but enable me to live by faith in thy word,—in thy Son, who loved me, and gave himself for me,—that in due time I may receive my inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

38. What rebel against an earthly sovereign, under proclamation of mercy, stands out, when he knows he shall be fetched in by the hand of justice? But how many refractory sinners deride Christ's offers of mercy, and his messengers of peace, till they be slain by his vengeance! You madmen, have you counsel, wisdom, and strength for the battle? Can your heart endure, and your hands be

strong in the day that God shall deal with you? Can the gods whom you serve deliver you out of his hand? No. You must one day be brought under his regal power, either in favour or fury, either to the praise of his glorious grace, or to the magnifying of his justice. If you hate his throne, you must be made his footstool. If you will not have him for your head, you must be trodden under his feet. If he be not your Saviour, he must be your angry Judge. If you will not touch the golden sceptre of his mercy, you must be crushed by the heavy rod of his wrath. Now his flag of mercy is displayed, and his taper of peace burns. But who knows how soon that flag may be folded up, and that taper extinguished? And then as for those his enemies that would not that he should reign over them, they must be brought and slain before his face. Oh! now send out thy ambassadors of humble prayers to meet him. Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace. Better come in as a favourite, than be dragged in as a traitor.

39. Sin and sorrow are two inseparable companions. If I let in the one, I cannot shut out the other. If my moments be spent in mirth, my eternity must be spent in mourning. If I shall not weep while I have mercy to pardon me, I must lament for ever, without having an eye to pity me. A bottle of tears sprung from Jesus' blood and grace, may now quench a fire of sin; but an ocean of tears shall never quench the flames of hell. Therefore, while the wicked go on laughing, let me walk mournfully with my God. He that swims in sin, must sink in sorrow; and he that sows in tears shall reap

in joy. Let me now weep after a godly sort, that I may not weep, but sing for ever.

40. Whatever way the tree inclines while it grows, that way it falls when cut down, and there it lieth. As we are in life, so for the most part we are in death, and so we lie to eternity; whether it be toward heaven, or toward hell. An error in war is death; but an error in death is damnation. Let me therefore live as I wish to die, and die as I wish to live for ever. Lord Jesus, let the bent of my soul be toward thee, that so I may fall to thee, and ever rest in and with thee.

41. After running through many a pleasant meadow, and along many a shady grove and flowery bank, Jordan empties itself into the Dead Sea of Sodom, where its waters lose both their name and their worth. So it is with wicked men. Here they often walk through meadows of worldly pleasures, and rest under the shades of earthly comforts and sports, and wallow amongst the flowers of worldly delights, but at last they are cast into hell among them that forget God; and their very happiness is turned into part of hell; their beauty into horror; their honour into shame; their lusts into tormenting devils; their pleasures into bitterness; their scarlets into flames of fire and brimstone.—Lord Jesus, by thy blood, Spirit and grace, make me a pure stream, that may end in heaven. I care not what a rough or gloomy passage I have, if but there I lose my weakness and sinful corruption, for likeness and nearness to thyself.

42. What is a day to an age? or an age to eternity? The shortest day is a part of the longest

time, but the longest time is no part of eternity. Why then do we foolishly heap up goods for mortality, lay up riches which at best are not for many years, perhaps not for many hours, and yet provide nothing for eternity? Why do we so carefully humour and uphold a mouldering piece of clay, a frail and dying body, which cannot stand above an age, perhaps not above an hour, and neglect our souls that must endure for ever? Since we all aim at a prosperous life, let us, by receiving the Lord Jesus, and walking in him, labour for a glorious eternity.

43. All men would have happiness for their end; but few men will have Christ for their way, and holiness for their preparation for it. All would have the kingdom of heaven, and the supposed ease and glory of it; but few seek it, and the righteousness of it. Most men would live with Balaam, and die with Israel; live with the graceless, and die with the godly. But none shall go to God in death, but such as draw near to him in life. Unless the kingdom of God be first in us on earth, we shall never enter into the kingdom of God in heaven. None shall rest in heaven hereafter, but such as have their conversation in heaven here. None shall enter into the gates of felicity, but such as tread the narrow path of piety. Lord, make me holy, as well as happy, that I may love to glorify thee, as well as to be glorified by thee.

44. There be too many to-morrow Christians, who set their days of repentance with God, as if they had the lordship of time and the monopoly of grace, which are only at his disposal. God hath promised pardon to the penitent; but he hath never promised

a to-morrow to the negligent. If I put off God to-day, he may put me off to-morrow. If I misimprove one hour of grace, he may never give me another. If I put by his hand of mercy to-day, his hand of justice may apprehend me before to-morrow. When I would repent, I may not have time, or when I would have mercy, I may not find repentance.—Lord Jesus, since thou hast given me this hour of grace to repent in, give me grace in this hour to repent with. Not only admit me when I come to thee, but draw me, when I have neither will nor power to come of my own.

45. Lord, what a shadow, a nothing, is the life of man! The time past is as a told tale, a finished dream, or a bird flown from the owner out of sight. The time present is a vanishing day, a galloping hour, or flying minute. The time to come is altogether uncertain of being enjoyed. The evening sun may see us dead. Lord Jesus, in this hour, make me sure of thee as made of God to me wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; for in the next I am not sure of myself.

46. Alexander, after dividing his wealth among his friends, said, that he had reserved *hope* for himself. Alas! how few Christians can part with all for Christ, and live by faith. They cannot think of losing what they have here, in hopes to find it again in heaven. Crates, in his way to philosophy, threw his goods into the sea, saying, That he had rather drown them, than that they should drown him: for he thought riches and virtue incompatible. But how many professed Christians, in their way to Jesus Christ, throw away themselves and their souls

to save their gold! Rather than cast their bread upon the waters, they will throw themselves into the ocean. By such things we may know their true master. He hath no part in Christ, that will not part with all for Christ. He lives but a life of sense, that cannot form a living out of a promise. Lord Jesus, thou art my portion and reward, sufficient for me to live on for ever; therefore take freely of my earthly things whatever thou hast any use for, to promote piety or supply poverty.

47. Rich men have for their treasure, bundles of rights, chests of plate, bags of gold, and cabinet of jewels; but, alas! when they go abroad, they cannot carry it along without burden, or leave it behind without fear. How much happier is a child of God, that hath his treasure always in him; and though it comprehends all the fulness of God, he carries it alway about with him. Let him be afflicted or persecuted as he will, he cannot lose his new covenant promises, or his possession of Christ, and of God in him. You may sooner rend his soul from his body, than rend his treasure from his soul. Let him lose his wealth, his city, his country, or even his life, he will still carry his all with him. Lord Jesus, let me have thee, and thy Father, and blessed Spirit remarkably enjoyed, and strip me of all other things when thou pleasest.

48. Old Testament days were but like winter, dark and cloudy, sharp and stormy; and yet how many then travelled cheerfully to heaven! But gospel times, like summer days, are light, clear, sweet, and warm, full of beams of grace and mercy; and yet how slowly and sadly do many of us go to

heaven! Nay, how fearfully we waste these precious days, and neglect these golden opportunities! O! when shall that soul find time to repent, that is hardened in these melting times! What days shall that soul find to go to heaven, that shall idle away these gospel-days! How shall that man find pardoning grace, that sinneth away such seasons of grace! To whom shall that soul appeal who renounceth Jesus Christ! How dreadful, his case upon whom the shadows of his deathful evening are stretched out, before he set forth for heaven! But how much more dreadful his case, to whom his clear and sweet days of gospel-light do only make hell the blacker and sadder! We that have clear shining of gospel-light, sweet invitations of divine mercy, and large manifestations of redeeming love, must either go to heaven on the easiest, or to hell on the hardest terms.

49. Listen, O my soul, serious hints are addressed to me from every airth. Yonder dying men breathe into my ear these important groans: 'Oh! lose not a moment of time; for thy whole time is but a moment. Oh! now make sure of heaven; for thou knowest not how soon thou must leave this earth!'—Hark! how yonder damned men address thee in the most lamentable roarings: 'Oh! come and see the end of sin in our everlasting torments! Come, learn the value of time in us, that must for ever suffer for our misimprovement of it!' Nay, let me listen to thy own words, thy own expostulations: 'My body, must I, who live for ever, satisfy thy filthy, thy beastly lusts! When thou art wrapt up in rottenness, where shall I spend my begun eter-

nity? Must I lose the possession of heaven, the fellowship of angels, and the everlasting enjoyment of God, in order to indulge thy base appetites! Is it not better that I should carry thee to heaven, than that thou shouldst carry me to hell?'—But hear, my Saviour speaks: 'Behold I stand at the door, and knock, till my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. Here I stand weeping, knocking, begging, and waiting. Open, open unto me. Let not sin lodge in thy heart, and Christ wait at the door; let not damnation rule within, and salvation stand without.' The times I live in address me: 'Oh! now be a living Christian, for these are dying deathful days. Oh! now be a groaning, growing Christian; for these are backsliding times. Oh! now make Jesus Christ and his salvation thine; for here thou knowest not what is thine own.' In fine, I hear the voice of the archangel summoning the dead to come forth to judgment. 'Arise, you holy and blessed believers, to take your place at Christ's right hand, and be finally adjudged to everlasting life. Arise, ye cursed sinners, to public shame and contempt, and to receive the final sentence of your eternal damnation.' Lord, grant an obedient ear, and a serious heart, to hear the first voices with fear and trembling, that I may hear the last without fear.

50. In a choice, it is common to leave when we take. The soul that chooseth life and grace, refuseth all things else. Lord, let vain men follow fashions, but clothe thou me with salvation, and cover me with the robes of righteousness; let them be all-glorious without, but let me be all-glorious

within; let them crown themselves with rose-buds, but crown thou me with twelve stars; let them have all the sweetness, beauties, glories, and excellencies of the earth, but let Jesus Christ be my portion. All other things are nothing at all, where Christ is all in all. Therefore be serious, O my soul; for thou hast none of Christ, till thou canst truly say, None but Christ.

51. The shortness of their life, the extent and difficulty of their work, and the eternity of their end, should make the heart of every Christian to tremble. Our life is but a withering flower, a flying cloud, a vanishing shadow, a perishing breath. The night of death instantly cometh, in which no man can work. And yet, in this short inch of time, what work is to be done? What strong enemies to be conquered? What principalities and powers to be routed? What beloved lusts to be subdued, right hands to be cut off, and right eyes to be plucked out? What strict rules to be followed, a strait gate, and a narrow way, to go through? What a long race to be run with a short breath, and a great way to be gone by a setting sun? And what are we to expect when this taper is out, this breath is expired? Even as we have sowed, so to reap, either to be eternally crowned, or eternally damned. Whatever, therefore, my hand findeth to do, let me do it with all my might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither I go.—Lord, help me so to work with and for thee in time, as that I may rest with thee for ever.

52. For comely Helen, what a bloody siege of

Troy! For amiable Rachael how many years of hard service did Jacob cheerfully fulfil! What then doth Jesus Christ deserve, who is altogether lovely, and before whose shining glory, the beauty of the whole creation is but ugliness and deformity! Therefore, be not discouraged, O my soul, though thine enemies be fierce, their assaults cruel, and thy resistance even unto blood, thou fightest for a beautiful Christ, that infinitely more than deserves it. Though thy rules be strict, thy duties hard, and thy labours great, thou servest for an amiable Christ, that will sufficiently reward it. Fix thine eyes upon the lovely beauties of thy Christ, and thy espousals; and then all service for and of him will be thy pleasure.

53. Formerly I, with the world, accounted the spirit of a Christian a melancholy one, and the paths of holiness unpleasant, leading to the deserts of sad retirement. But now I see they have hidden manna, which the world knows not of; glorious joys, which strangers do not intermeddle with; and the closer and exacter they walk, the fuller and sweeter are their joys. Formerly, the very thoughts of parting with my pleasures and delights, to embrace soul-humbling, self-denying duties, were grievous to me. But now, blessed be God, it is sweet to want my former sweetness, and my rejoicing to be without my former joys. I now see a heaven in the way to heaven; and that one look of faith, one smile of Christ, one glance of heaven, one grape of Canaan, one glimpse of my crown of glory, yields more sweetness, comfort, and content, than all the pleasures and delights of the world; and that the very gleaning of spiritual

joy is better than the vintage of carnal delights. Let no man, therefore, stand off from religion from want of pleasures; for here he shall not lose, but only change them for far better.

54. None of Solomon's many tried conclusions took but the last, namely, the fear of God. O my soul, thou mayest tire thyself with variety of objects; but nothing but the enjoyment of thy God will satisfy thee. He only is the full and primary goodness, the all-powerful and all-sufficient fulness. As manna was the delight of every palate, Jesus Christ is satisfaction to every soul. Let me, therefore, taste and see how sweet the Lord is. It is because we never find sufficiency in one creature, that our heart wanders after a variety of them. Take up therefore thy rest, O my soul, in the chiefest and choicest good, which comprehends all the rest. These golden rays of goodness, which lie scattered in creatures, are only to be found conjunctively in God. These pure ingredients, which compose the highest excellency, largest goodness, and fullest perfection, are only to be found collectively in him. Knowest thou any thing profitable, delectable, or desirable, in the creature? Thou mayest see it in thy God, find it in thy Christ. Art thou captivated? He is thy Redeemer. Art thou wounded? He is thy kind Samaritan. Art thou broken-hearted? He will bind thee up. Art thou sick? He is thy physician. Art thou persecuted? He is thy refuge. Art thou hungry and thirsty? He is thy living bread and flowing stream. Art thou weary? He is thy rest. Art thou in want or poverty? He is an inexhaustible treasury.

Art thou in disgrace or contempt? He is thy honour. Art thou dead, dull, and heavy? He is a quickening Spirit. Wouldst thou have grace? He is the fountain. Wouldst thou have heaven? He is the way. "He shall guide thee by his counsel, and afterward receive thee to glory." Let me, therefore, never leave the living fountain, to quench my thirst at a broken cistern. Why should I tire myself to gather drops of honey from so many dying flowers, when I can satisfy myself with streams of sweetness in my living Christ? In this let me bid them all adieu; for Christ outbids them all.

55. A Christian may raise another paradise here below, and make a lower heaven on earth. For "this," O Jehovah, "is eternal life, to know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know Christ, in the evidence of his love revealed to us, and Christ revealed in us, is the very entrance of heaven. For what is the perfection of grace, but the full knowledge of him? And what is the consummation of glory, but the immediate vision and enjoyment of him? Lord, therefore, add to my knowledge every day, that, at my last day, I may be perfect in Christ.

56. Godly sorrow, like weeping Mary, seeks Christ. Saving faith, like wrestling Jacob, finds and holds Christ. Heavenly love, like the affectionate spouse, cleaves to, and dwells with Christ. Here it brings him into the chambers of the queen; and hereafter it brings her into the chambers of the king. It is an eternal grace alway lodging in the bosom of Christ. Lord, thou art the desire of my soul. O that I could seek thee, find, and love thee, so as I may for ever enjoy thee!

57. The stream of sorrow, like water, ascends no higher than its spring. Sin gives two deadly stabs, one at the soul of man, and a second at the heart of Christ. If I mourn for sin only as it hath wounded my soul, my sorrow flows from a natural heart, as it only ascends to a natural height. But if I weep for sin, as it hath wounded Christ, as it hath shed that blood that saves me, and pierced that heart that loves me, my sorrow hath its spring in heaven, since it riseth to a supernatural height. Lord, that my sorrow may be sound, pierce my heart for sin, as it strikes through my soul, and pierceth Christ.

58. My life is sweet; but Christ must be sweeter. My soul is precious; but Christ must be more dear and precious. My salvation is much; but Christ must be more. He must be prized and loved above all. Were there no arms of mercy to receive me, no heaven to entertain me, no weight of glory to crown me, Christ would deserve my superlative love. It is carnal love to follow Christ for loaves. It is mercenary love to seek him for reward. It is but an adulterate affection that loves the present more than the giver, or the ring more than the suitor. The choice cannot be cordial, that aims only at a portion; that love cannot be real, that aims only at a benefit.—Lord, thou art infinitely amiable in thyself, let me therefore love thee for thyself.

59. Let me never venture on a duty unless I bring God to it; nor rest satisfied, unless I carry God from it. Let me seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face for evermore. Let me never rise from duty, before the countenance of God rise in mercy on my soul. Unless Christ fit me for duty, and meet me

in it, it will be no ordinance of comfort to me. What is the chariot, if my beloved be not in it? O blessed soul that never prays, hears, or receives the sacrament, but carries Christ to all, enjoys Christ in all, and brings Christ from all! Lord, in all my approaches to thee, let me go out in thy strength, and return in thy presence.

60. Oh! my soul, thou art always striving, and yet sin is always stirring. Thou fearest the truth of thy grace, because thou feelest the working of thy inward lusts. But it will be so while I live. Thou canst not come out of Egypt, but Amalek will lay wait for thee in the way. The flesh will be sure to trouble thee, though it never will be able to conquer thee. He that is at rest in sin, hath Satan peaceably reigning in his heart. But where there is any work with Christ, there will be always war with sin. While I live, sin will dwell in my mortal body, and, like my will, be still twisting about, until the wall be demolished. Sin brought forth death, and death must be the tomb of sin. To keep me humble, God, when he broke open my prison, hath left the chain on my feet. To exercise my graces, he hath left the Canaanites in the land. To exercise my faith, Goliah still shows himself in the field. Let me, denying all confidence in created armour and strength, attack him in the name of the Lord,—in the strength of Christ. So, though I cannot help the rebelling power of sin, I shall alway hinder the ruling power of it. As it shall be my grief, that sin will have its being, it shall be my care, that it never gain by its striving. Though sin may live in me, yet I will never live in sin.

61. I must not pray simply against temptation, but against the evil of it. I may be tempted, and yet not overcome, even as castles are often assaulted, without being taken. If Satan inject an evil motion, and I reject it, this is not mine, but the devil's sin. It will be a shining jewel in my crown of victory, and an aggravating *item* in his final judgment. Why should I be terrified at his roaring, as if he could not rage, but he must devour? or, as if grace and temptation could not stand together? Spiritual wickedness is always found in the heavenliest souls on earth. Satan's violence to bruise my heel, is a token that he feels or fears my treading on his head. If Christ, as my Captain, lead my attack, he will bring me off victorious; so that temptation shall prove a file to beautify my soul, and a sword to wound mine adversary. As Satan will be always tempting, let me be always watching; and what I cannot hinder, let me be sure to hate; so shall it be my joy to fall into temptation, and the devil's misery to fall into his own pit.

62. In a terrible storm, Cæsar cried to the desponding pilot, "Fear not, thou carriest Cæsar." How truly may a gracious person say, in the midst of all desertions, afflictions, and tribulations, 'Fear not, O my soul, thou carriest Jesus Christ?' What though the windows of heaven be opened for a storm, or the fountains of the great deep broken up for a flood, desertions from above, and afflictions from below, yet God, that sits in heaven, will not cast away his son, and Christ, that lives in me, will not let me sink. Swelling waves are but to lift me nearer to heaven, and raging winds are but to make

me awake my master. O prize thy Christ, trust thy Christ, and fear no evil; for if I sail with Christ, I am sure to land with Christ.

63. If Satan cannot hinder the birth of our graces, he labours to compass their death. Hence it is ordinary to see Christians lose their first love, and fall from their first works. The love that was once a sparkling and ascending flame, becomes a little spark, almost suffocated with the earth. The godly sorrow, which, like Jordan, once overflowed all its banks, becomes a summer brook, which makes the traveller ashamed. The man's proceedings against sins were once like Jehu's motion, rapid and active; but now he can sleep in Delilah's lap, while she steals away his strength. Once he could give no rest to his eyes till God gave rest to his soul; but now he can lie down with sin in his bosom, and wounds in his conscience. At first his zeal did eat him up; but now his lean decays have eaten up his zeal. How, O Christian, is thine excellency departed, and thy crown fallen from thy head! What a dangerous breach hast thou made for the entrance of sin and sorrow! Temptations find thee wrecked, and leave thee wounded; thy graces, that could once have broken through an host of armies, and drawn water out of the wells of salvation, now follow thee trembling. Thou hast powerful enemies, but feeble graces,—often assaulted, but easily conquered. Thy sun sets, and thy clouds arise. Thy graces decline in their exercise, and God's favours are less observable. Thou restrainest communion with saints, and God withholds communion from thy soul. Thou offerest up thy sacrifices without holy fire of

zeal, and he punisheth thy coldness with a fire of wrath. Thy spirit delights not in him, and his soul hath no delight in thee. Bad news from heaven produceth sad news from conscience. What tremblings of heart! What astonishment of soul! What disputes against mercy, and questionings of salvation will thy wounded conscience and bleeding spirit raise? What flashes of lightning! What claps of thunder will break out upon thy soul, when the hot pangs of death shall mix with cold and chill doubts of salvation!—While therefore I draw out my soul to praise God for grace implanted, let me exert my strength to serve God by grace improved; that as every hour sets me nearer my grave, every action may set me nearer my heaven.

64. An hypocrite is the devil's servant in God's livery; and therefore out of favour both in heaven and earth; for men see his livery, and therefore hate him; and God seeth his heart, and will not own him; men see his outward sanctity, and therefore deride him; and God seeth his inward hypocrisy, and therefore abhors him;—so that he travels in the wilderness, and yet shall never come to Canaan. At the last, instead of "Well done, good and faithful servant," Christ shall with detestation, ask him, "Who hath required this at your hands?" He that cunningly deceived others, at last foolishly beguiles himself. He steals his own damnation, and sweats to obtain hell. Profane men go to hell openly by the gate, but hypocrites steal in through the postern. While therefore these clothe themselves with formality, clothe thou me with Jesus' righteousness, and with an universal sincerity in re-

ceiving and following him. If then men hate me, God will love me. My duties may be full of imperfection, but will never want a gracious acceptance; my way may be through trouble, but my rest shall be in glory.

65. As great serenity of weather prognosticates an earthquake or whirlwind; so great security of life forebodes much trembling and astonishment of spirit. He that builds his hopes in formality and carnal security, will meet with a fearful fall. None is more liable to fall suddenly into the deeps of damnation, than the man that puts off his open profaneness, to put on an outward profession,—takes down the frame of his gross iniquity, to set up a superficial form of piety, and covers his face with a surface of religion. For while he thinks himself well, he seeks not to be better,—so that he slumbers away his time, till the midnight cry is heard, and then he startles and awakes, and sees nothing but the bridge of mercy drawn up and the gates of heaven shut in. Perhaps he pleads his relation to Christ as his master, and shows his services, as if he would command eternal happiness for his wages. But Christ drives him off as a never known, never approved worker of iniquity. Because he hath reformed in many things, and conformed to many duties, he therefore, with Agag, concludes the bitterness of death to be past, and so clothes himself with smooth imaginations, and deceitful apprehensions, till he be hewn asunder before the Lord. Let me therefore be always fearing, never formal or secure in any duty. Better tremble here, than startle in hell.

66. Sin must be viewed either with tears or in

torments. If I commit the least sin, and die impenitent, my soul is infallibly lost for ever. If I commit sin, and do repent, what hidings of and frowns from God! what breaking of bones, what bitter pangs! what shadows of death! what terrors of hell may seize upon me, before I can have my peace and assurance established, should I give way to sin because it is pleasant, or because it is pardonable? Do I love poison because it is sweet, or because I may have an antidote? If it work not out my life, it will work to my trouble. I have a precious soul; should I lose it for a lust? I have a gracious God; shall I venture him for a sin? No; let me alway reject that for which I am sure to lose my peace, likely to lose my soul.

67. What heir on his way to take possession of a rich inheritance, lets a green meadow or pleasant garden detain him; or a black cloud or foul way dishearten him? O my soul, thou art travelling to take possession of a glorious inheritance among the saints, wilt thou turn aside to crop every flower? Wilt thou stand still to hear every melodious sound? Wilt thou leave thy way to drink of every gilded stream of carnal pleasure? What is this, but to view a meadow, and lose a manor;—for a dying flower, to part with an eternal crown—for a flying vanity, to lose an immortal felicity?—What though my way should be in tears, and my days in sorrow, a clouded sky and a swelling sea, that my very life should be in danger, yet my infinitely good Father, my large portion, my sweet rest, and my everlasting comfort, will make amends for all. Let therefore neither smiles nor frowns from the world, retard my

travel to my Father's house, my better country, my eternal happiness in heaven.

68. As our heart is, so is our estate. Riches are but cyphers; it is the mind that makes the sum. What the better am I for a great estate, if I am not contented with it? Desires of having will more than eat up all the comforts and delights of possession. In going through a large fair, Socrates bravely said, "How many things do I not need?" But it was much more grand in the apostles to live as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. All would be well, if my heart were but well. Let me therefore form my heart to my estate, and then I shall have an estate according to my heart.

69. When I think of Job tormented on the dunghill, John hungering in the wilderness, Peter, and especially Jesus on the cross, I am led to think, how severely God will hereafter punish those reprobates whom he loathes, when he deals so sharply with his children whom he loves. Meditate terror therefore, you mockers of the miseries of saints; for in them your hell sparkles out on earth. And when I consider Herod in his pomp, Haman in his honour, Ahasuerus at his feast, &c. I think, if God drop so much kindness into a vessel of wrath, what will he for ever pour into a vessel of mercy? If God do so much for a slave on earth, what will he do for a son in heaven? Never therefore, you saints, murmur at the prosperity of the wicked. It is a visible proof of your own eternal happiness. Let therefore the afflictions of saints give me a glimpse of hell, and the prosperity of the wicked give me a glance of heaven.

70. God hath made all things for his elect, and his elect for himself. All is yours, and ye are Christ's. If earth, if heaven, if hell, if Christ, and all that he is, hath, or doth, be for me, let me serve my God in all things, and myself in nothing.

71. No creature hath any goodness in it, but as it stands connected with God the chiefest good. All the comforts and enjoyments of wicked men, not springing from his love, are but dainty channels, mudded and embittered by his wrath, fading brooks, that will make their dependents ashamed. He that only enjoys creatures in themselves, loseth both them and himself. These only are pure and sweet streams, which run from the fountain of redeeming mercy through Jesus Christ. Lord, let all that I enjoy flow from thy love, through the blood of thy Son; and make me to love thee, because thou first lovedst me.

72. As all the rivers which flow from the sea run back again to it, so all these blessings which come from God, must alway be employed for God. What I receive from him in his mercy, he must have returned in his glory. Lord, whatever I enjoy, let me find thee in it, and serve thee with it.

73. Love should alway be the life of all religious motion. That soul goes truly that hath true love to weigh it; and that soul loves truly that hath a true object to centre it. A gracious spirit loves the Lord, not so much because he doth good, as because he is good. It is not proper affection, that loves an effluent sweetness more than an inherent goodness. In the love of Christ for himself, there is alway sufficient strength to move and constrain the soul.—

Were there no heaven to reward, or hell to punish, holiness should be my heaven, and sin a hell to my heart.

74. Our natural life is but a lingering death, and a race to the grave. We only begin to live indeed, when we begin to live to God and for eternity. In reckoning his age, Alexander counted not his years, but his victories. In taking account of my life, let me not reckon my time, but my enjoyments of Christ and labours for him.

75. If I am a saint, three questions, What I was; What I am; and, What I shall be, require my serious answers.—What was I? A rebel to my God, a prodigal to my Father, a slave to my lust, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.—What am I? A son of God, a spouse of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost, begotten of Jesus' word, blood, and Spirit, a citizen of Zion, written among the living in Jerusalem.—What shall I be? A glorified saint, a companion of angels, a triumphant conqueror, a crowned king, an attendant on the Lamb, a spectator of all these soul-ravishing and ineffable excellencies that are in God, an immediate beholder and enjoyer of Jesus Christ, nay one with him in his exaltation, clothed with his excellencies, enthroned in his glories, crowned with his eternity, and filled with his happiness.—Oh! stand amazed at free grace. And since God hath made me a vessel filled with his mercy, let my person and life be a spring flowing with his praise.

76. My soul takes its rise from every creature to heaven. When I see the stars, I think, If one star be of such magnitude, what must be the dimensions of

these heavens, in which so many are fixed? Nay, how immense that God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain? When I see the sun, I think, If one sun make such a bright and glorious day on earth, what a glorious heaven will that be, in which every saint shall be a sun, and every sun as much brighter than this, as it is brighter than our bodies; and yet all those but shadows to the Sun of Righteousness, to the Lord God and the Lamb, who are the light thereof! When I consider how the rising sun, by the perfection of his beams, puts beauty, life, and joy upon the face of the whole lower world, paints the flowers, gilds the corn, makes the plants to flourish, cheers the birds, and makes the valleys to shout for joy, I think, What shall be the shining beauty and ravishing delights of that soul upon which the brightness of Jesus and his Father's glory and splendour of his beauty shall rise, and rest, and shine to all eternity! When I consider the air, how I cannot think at all without drawing it in, I see, that I can think of nothing well, but as God puts goodness into my thoughts. Lord, when I view the variety of thy creatures, and see one excel in beauty, another in strength, another in wisdom, another in love, and others in swiftness, I see them but beams of thy brightness, and streams of thy fulness, which had their being from thy hand, and have all their mixed perfection in thy pure essence; and I think, how happy shall that soul be, that enjoys all perfection in God, and God infinitely above all!—When I see stately buildings, shady groves, crystal brooks, and pleasant meadows, owned by a wicked man, I think, if Simeon gets such a mess, what will Benja-

min's portion be? If the children of concubines have so large gifts, what will be the inheritance of the Son of promise! When I look on my own temporals, I bless thee, that I have a convenient sufficiency, a goodly heritage, tents by the wells of Elim, a portion from the hand of him who knows what is best for me, I think, if thou givest me so much in the time of my vanity, what wilt thou do for me in the day of my glory? But above all, when I think on that sweet communion I enjoy with God, these glorious rays which dart from the face of Jesus Christ, and ravishing joys that flow from the wells of salvation, what large views have I of my eternal happiness! For, if the Lord give me such a choice mercy for my earnest, how rich a blessing shall I have for my inheritance? If this be the first fruits, what shall be the full harvest? If I have such a glorious beam in my prison, what a glorious sun shall shine in my palace? If I have such joy in the expectation of my happiness, what shall I have in the eternal consummation of it?

77. Anaxagoras said, He was born that he might contemplate heaven. My soul, wast not thou born again, that thou mightest live in heaven? God hath formed thee to enjoy communion with himself. Stay not then one hour on earth, but, with Enoch, spend thy days with God, walk and converse with Jesus Christ in the galleries of his love, and, with Moses, live on the mount of glory. Live so strictly, and walk so closely with God, that, with David, thou mayest be ever with him.

78. Lord Jesus, how near wilt thou bring me to thyself? Must I abide in thee, and thou in me?

Must we be of one soul, and of one spirit? Is it not enough, that I should repose myself in the bosom of thy sweetest affections; that I should be always in the embraces of thy choicest love; that I should be for ever wrapt up in the bowels of thy tenderest mercies? But must I so dwell with thee, and wilt thou so dwell in me, as to make me an eternal sharer in thy bliss, and partner in thy glory? What is man, that thou shouldst so regard him? What am I, that thou shouldst so remember and magnify me? —Lord, let thy mercies so constrain me, that all my affections may run out unto thee, and all my strength may run out for thee.

79. Every real Christian is the spiritual temple of the living God. Worldly cares and earthly desires are the buyers and sellers that pollute this temple. Now, how unworthy, how criminal, to make this house of God a den of thieves? How vile idolatry, to set up a dagon by God's ark, a sinful lust by Jesus Christ? Every power of his soul, and member of his body, is a vessel of that temple. How debasing and wicked, to employ these golden, these sanctified vessels, to a sordid, abominable use; to take that heart, which should be filled with God, and fill it with sinful lusts; to lay open these ears, which should be always ready to hear what God shall speak, to a detracting tale, a foolish or filthy jest; to defile that tongue, which should set forth the praises of redeeming Godhead, and must hereafter for ever sing the sweet Hosannahs and Hallelujahs of heaven, with idle speeches and wicked words? How sacrilegious, to let forth God's vessels to sin and his rooms to lust? Lord, whatever of me

thou takest for thy own, fill, rule, and use it as thy own.

80. My duties are uprightly performed before God, when they turn me into their own very nature. Happy student, that by his continual reading and meditation makes his breast a very library of Christ. Happy Christian, that so hears the word of God, that it abides in him, and is as it were incorporated into him;—and who so reads, as to make himself a living epistle of Christ, in whose practice others may read what he had before read in the Bible;—who so blesseth and thanks God, as to make himself a praise to him; who so prays, as that every petition runs through his whole conversation;—when religious duties are the fire, and his life the incense? Till our worship be distilled into practice, it is but an empty cloud. Till our religious duties be as vitals in our practice, they are but dead performances. Let therefore, O Lord, my duties receive life from thy Spirit, and my whole conversation derive life from those duties.

81 Even in the wilderness, Basil found, that he could not be more happy or devout, because he retained his old heart. I have often sought the privatest place of duty, and pressed to hear the best ministers, and enjoy the best means, expecting great advantages; but have gained little, because I still carry with me a bad heart. This is the accursed Remora, that stops or retards me in my course to heaven. I find, that it is not retirement into lonely places, but retiring into, and by the Spirit of God and blood of Christ purifying and ruling, my own heart, that will make me to grow in grace. It is

not my coming to pure ordinances, but my bringing with me a pure heart, that will advance my fellowship with God. Lord, I have often searched my heart, and still my heart deceiveth me in the search. O by thy grace fit my heart for every duty, that every duty may be fit for thyself.

82. Princes combat with flesh and blood; Christians wrestle with principalities and powers. Their wars give days of truce; ours not a minute of cessation. Their conditions of peace may occasion a retreat; here nothing but death can raise the siege. Kings, when overcome, may save themselves by flight; but Christians may as soon flee from themselves as from their enemies. Here policy and power, cruelty and perpetuity, all concur to render a battle dangerous; not only all the powers of earth, but all the forces and stratagems of hell, are always charged upon the soul. The Christian is still in the field of conflict. He cannot let down his hands, but Amalek prevails. Not to be a conqueror, is to be a prisoner. Not to win the field, is to lose the soul.—Security wounds, yielding kills, and nothing but victory crowns. Let me therefore watch as for my life, and fight as for my soul. I shall soon see these enemies no more, but lay down my sword, and take up my palm, and solemnize my victory to all eternity. What though I now read and hear of the power and policy of my innumerable enemies, and sadly experience the truth of it; yet how glorious a conqueror shall I be, when, in the strength of Christ, I shall overcome them all. What though my assaults be many, and my enemies mighty, if God strengthen me, I have enough to comfort me;

for the greater my enemy, the more glorious my victory; and the more glorious my victory, the more triumphant my glory.

83. It is strange to see some Christians mourn as inordinately for ordinary losses, as if not only the stream, but the fountain, had been exhausted. Let my understanding act like itself.—What, must the stream of my sorrow run wholly in this channel? Is there no mourning to be made for sin? Shall I suffer my heart to swim away in tears? Are there no duties to be performed for God? Do not I know, that such a sad heart cannot rightly serve a good God? I have lost the creature, but I must keep my God. I have parted with an outward comfort; but I shall find it again with advantage in Jesus Christ. What though I had lost not only one, but all earthly things, yet in enjoying Christ I am possessor of all things? Let therefore the failing of the stream but send me to the everflowing fountain. Let me mourn for the loss of the creature, in bewailing the sinful cause of it: so shall my sorrow be godly, not worldly. Let me never be satisfied, till I make up the absence of the creature in the enjoyment of Christ, the fountain of it: so shall it be my gain, not my loss.

84. It is said, that plants of a contrary nature, growing near to one another, as roses to garlick or the like, extract each what juice of the earth corresponds with their nature, and so are the most perfect of their kind. I am sure this is true in spirituals, and therefore I do not wonder that the saints are so much afflicted. I see prosperity is too strong a sucker, insensibly exhausting the spiritual sap and

celestial vigour of the soul, and so debilitating the principles of growth and life. Whereas adversity only draws out what may be malignant, and leaves behind it what may be for nourishment; takes off the dregs, and leaves the spirits, by which the soul is elevated, and made more fruitful in the works of holiness. Therefore, Lord, if the flowers of the world be too succulent, transplant me among the briars, that I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

85. When I look up to heaven, how often I see the sun shine and set? When I look to the sea, how often I see the tossed ship mount toward heaven, and again go down into the deep? And how similar is my own spiritual condition? When I look down into my own soul, how often I see my inward comforts rise and fall? Now I am on mount Tabor, and have a glance of heaven. Anon I lie weeping in Bochim, because I have lost sight of my country. Joshua's long day is turned into Paul's sad night, in which neither moon nor stars appeared. To quicken our affections, God gives us now and then some glances of heaven, that we may be in love with it, and again turns away the face of his throne, and spreads a cloud over it, that we may long for it. He suffers our happiness here to be imperfect, that we may press forward to that place in which it shall be perfect. Lord, when thou showest thyself, let me love and admire thee; when thou withdrawest thyself, let me follow thee.—And, under all changes, let my soul be always breathing, panting, longing, and reaching after thee, till I obtain the perfect, uninterrupted, and eternal enjoyment of thee.

86. Where the king is, there is the court; and where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God brings his heaven with him, and the man that enjoys God, carries heaven about with him. Let him be cast into a dungeon or furnace, or wherever else, he is still in heaven. If God be with me in a prison, I will, with Paul and Silas, sing my hallelujahs. If I am burning at a stake, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness will put out the flames, and turn their troubles into comforts; so that it is but winking, and I am in heaven. When I enjoy my reconciled God in Christ, I need neither sun, nor moon, nor any earthly comfort to enlighten my soul. The glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof: God himself irradiates it with the brightness of his beauty, and Christ himself fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Therefore, Lord, let me enjoy thyself, and then deal with me as thou pleasest.

87. A wicked man's life is like Belshazzar's feast. It begins in joy and luxury, mad mirth, and pleasure; but it ends in terror, trembling, anguish, and ruin. In his entrance, perhaps his gates are riches, his seats honour, his paths pleasures; he clothes gorgeously, walks delicately, and fares deliciously every day. But in his exit, he is cast out from God as an everlasting curse; destruction closeth her mouth upon him; his body is wrapt in loathsome dust and abominable vermin; his soul is buried in the flames of hell, and his name is covered with darkness. But mark the perfect man. Though the world, for a little time, hate and persecute him, his end is peace. Though he enter weeping, he

goes out rejoicing. Though he enter fighting, he goes out triumphing, while saints and angels clap their hands for joy. Let the end of my life be in everlasting fellowship with God, and I care not how many rubs I meet with in my way to it.

88. Earthly riches are not true, because they are unuseful to our soul; nay, golden heaps are ordinarily the ruinous plagues and miserable spoils of precious souls. And besides, they are not ours, because we cannot carry them with us, when we leave this world. In death, men quickly know whose that soul shall for ever be, which they have sinfully abused by their riches, but never know whose these things shall be, which they have so miserably provided. In their awaking at the last day, they shall find none of them in their hand. All earthly things are left behind us in death, and only our gracious habits and good works shall follow us, and abide with us for ever. If I would be rich, let me then, by Jesus' grace, raise virtues out of vanity; so shall I lay up goods indeed for eternity.

89. Competency is better than abundance. Being not far from my home, I need not make much provision for my way. Food and raiment will be sufficient for my journey; superfluity will be a burden. When Jacob had only his staff, he went on freely in his way; but when he had flocks and herds, he drove but slowly. We see daily rich men either losing their paths, or riding but little ground, while poor men run in the way of God's commandments. I have enough of earthly things, if I have but as much as will carry me well to heaven. Let me therefore desire no more than will mend my pace, and serve me in my journey.

90. We must never presume upon means without God, because the pipes cannot convey, unless the spring communicate. Nor must we presume upon God without using the means which he hath appointed, because the goings forth of providence are always in the paths of diligence. As in the fight with Amalek, Joshua fought while Moses prayed; so the proceeding of a Christian's faith should always be upon the mount, and his industry in the valley. While the heart is lifted up, the hand should be stretched out. He may rest in God's power and promise, who restlessly labours in the means. He may confidently depend on God's providence, who fully lays out himself in God's way. I must sow my seed, and wait for the rain and heat; do my work, and leave the event to God. I must neither be idle in using the means, nor make an idol of them, but henceforth lay my hand to them, as if they were all in all, and yet look above them, as if they were nothing at all.

91. Men are not, as Cicero said, naturally born to liberty and honour. It is but regenerate men that are children of love and heirs of glory, that are clothed with the sun, crowned with the stars, and reckoned among the angels of God. Let me reflect upon my dignity, and consider, whether an emperor should live like a beggar, and one clothed in scarlet should embrace a dunghill. Am I born of God; and shall I live like a beast? Hath God raised my spirits with the highest excellencies; and shall I stain my nobleness with poor empty vanities? Have, and may I feed on Christ; and shall I live on dust and dung? Am I a child of light; and

shall I commit works of darkness? Shall I sit with Christ to judge the world; and shall I now be a drudge to it? Hath Christ prepared for me a mansion in the heaven; and shall I, like a toad or mole, grovel and ferret in the earth? No. Being redeemed by, created in, and united to Christ, I am born to greater and higher things than to be a slave to a sinful lust, or drudge to an evil world.

92. Pure love runs wholly out of itself into the bosom of its beloved object. Heavenly love centres no lower than heaven. It only loves God in Christ, and lives in him, as its adequate object and rest. As a beam it only stands in reference to the sun, and loves creatures only as a step to advance it nearer to God. Lord, I would not care for heaven, were it not for thee, nor love myself were I not in thee.

93. Heaven is the very element, and Christ is the centre of every gracious soul. Heaven is its breathing place, and Christ the place of its rest. It cannot live out of that element, nor rest out of this centre. It is always struggling, till it get to heaven, always rolling, till it come to Christ. Return unto thy rest, O my soul. Lord, let me draw no breath, but that which I fetch from heaven, and never let me rest till I rest in thee.

94. Man is not contented with his mere being, but is still aspiring to an eminence in that being.— As plants are continually growing up till they come to that maturity which makes them perfect, so man is always pressing forward, till he come to that proposed end, which he thinks will make him happy.— O my soul, God in Christ is thine end and thy ex-

cellency; and thy happiness lies in moving forward till thou come to thy perfection in him. Be then always rising in faith and love, till thou comest to rest in the bosom of thy Lord.

95. The more closely we associate with Christ, the more shall we be like unto him. Moses but talked with God, and his face shone with a beam of God's glory. A soul that doth converse, and is familiar with Jesus Christ, will shine forth with the glories of Christ. As wisdom maketh the face of a man to shine, so Jesus Christ makes a soul to shine, so that he that judiciously looks upon him, can perceive, that that soul hath met with and seen the Lord. A strong reflex of the beams of righteousness and holiness in a man, manifests that he hath much viewed the Sun of Righteousness. He carries the very image of Christ upon him, and the very beauties of Christ about him. He looks like Christ, speaks like Christ, walks like Christ, lives like Christ, and knows that he comes from Christ. Always beholding the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory. If distant, dark, and reflexive views of Christ through a glass, render a soul so glorious, what must the clear, direct, and immediate views of, and fellowship with Christ in heaven render it? We shall indeed be like him, when we see him as he is. Our body shall be like his, our soul like his,—our glory like his, and our eternity like his, who is the God of beauty, excellency, and sweetness, concord, happiness, and eternity. Lord Jesus, let me now have such clear views of thee by faith, and such sweet enjoyments of thee, that hereafter I may not only be

happy as thou art happy, but may likewise be holy as thou art holy.

96. The life of faith is the noblest, pleasantest, richest, contentedest, easiest, and truest life on earth. It is the noblest life, for it takes the soul out of the house of fallen Adam, and carries it into the family of God. It makes her forget her father's house, and espouseth her to the King of glory. It is the pleasantest life; it lives upon the choicest excellency, and highest felicity, often wrapt up to the third heaven, to take its repast in inexpressible glory; it walks in the paths of pleasantness, and under all the heats and troubles of life, shades itself under the tree of life. It is the richest life. If our desires be according to our wants, it is impossible that we can want any good thing. Whatsoever we ask, believing that we receive, according to our faith, so it is unto us. It is the most contented life. It carries the fading creature, and lays him upon Christ; and, under all changes, holds fast God's all-sufficiency, and so sits down contentedly. It is the easiest life. As faith looks not on the strictness or difficulty of duty, but on the power and strength of Christ; if it meet with a hard precept, it dissolves into a sweet promise, carries it to a living Christ, and pleads it, till he confer proportionable strength to make the duty easy. In fine, it is the truest and onliest life. He is dead in sin, that doth not live by faith. Not to live, but to live well is life. Not to live well only, but to believe, is to live, and to live well indeed.

97. If God be the highest perfection in himself, and the highest good to the creature, it must be the

highest wisdom of man to choose him, and the highest piece of his duty to live in observance of him. If all creatures must be judged by his great majesty, and must bow before him, I admire the wisdom of the godly, and wonder at the folly of the wicked. In the full persuasion of these things, Lord, let me be of them that choose thee here, so as to enjoy thee hereafter; not of those that refuse thee here, and therefore must be for ever separated from thee hereafter.

98. Saving graces are the very courtiers of heaven, which wait upon Christ in his privy chamber. Riches, honours, credit, and the like, may do much below, and even keep out their betters; but in the palace of the King of glory, they must stand aside for ever. Even what men call moral virtues, must stand without. Only faith, love, humility, and the like, can be admitted into the presence chamber. Beautiful abominations, and base hearts wrapped up in fine clothes, parts and gifts, must stand at the gate. But none but true grace and holiness, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Only these are welcome to the King of glory. Only these are familiar with Jesus Christ. And, O Redeemer, happy are those thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom, and see thy glory! True love doth not only preserve every heavenly motion of the soul; but raiseth it to the highest perfection. The more I love, the more I shall be loved, and have the more full participation of him, who is altogether lovely. To love the chief good to the highest, is the greatest happiness. The purest and fullest love shall for ever wear the

weightiest crown of glory. Lord, perfect this grace in me, that I may be perfect in loving thee for ever.

99. The Israelites had to pass through Jordan before they landed in Canaan. The ark of the Lord carried before them divided its high swollen stream, and made it stand as an heap, till they were clean passed over. Every believing traveller through the wilderness of this world, must pass through death before he land in heaven. Blessed be God, that Jesus, our high priest, that bears the everlasting covenant on his shoulders, hath already dipt his feet in this water, in so much that its stream is divided, the sting of death plucked out, and the power of the curse cut off, so that death is a sure step into eternal glory.—Why then am I afraid to die? The channel is dry. I see my Saviour's footsteps in the bottom, and eternal happiness on the other side. The waters may go over my sins,—they may go over my miseries and troubles; but cannot go over my soul, but afford it a safe passage to its rest. Lord Jesus, therefore fit and sanctify me for my removal, and then take down my tent. I cannot be too soon with thee.

100. Here our souls, our desires are too capacious to be filled with all the pleasures and delights which the world can lay together. But hereafter, our pleasures and delights shall be too full for the most capacious vessels to comprehend; our glory shall be so great, that God's power, as well as his goodness, must necessarily renew and enlarge these souls, to render them capable to receive and retain that glory. His strength and love must jointly act in preparing and raising our dispositions, that they may be suit-

able for such a transcendent and high condition. God must bear us up, that we may bear our weight of glory. And because our joys cannot fully enter into us, we shall enter into them. Why then set a soul under a few drops of carnal pleasure, and neglect the spring and spouts of everlasting pleasure?—What glorious day, when the vessels of mercy shall be cast into the ocean of mercy, and filled to the brim with it; when the sons of true pleasure shall drink their fill, and for ever restfully swim in rivers of pleasures at God's right hand; when the soul that is sick of love, shall lie in the bosom of love, and for ever take its fill of love; when the children of God shall be for ever satisfied with the immediate views and full enjoyment of God.—the fulness, sweetness, and eternity of which no heart of man can comprehend! Lord, let the views of that joy and glory which thou hast prepared for me in heaven, turn away my soul from all the carnal delights and pleasures presented to me on earth, that so, neglecting them, I may be still pressing to thee, and breathing after thee. "O when shall I come and appear before God?"

FINIS.

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